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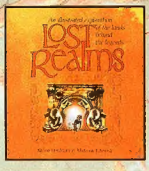

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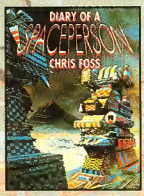

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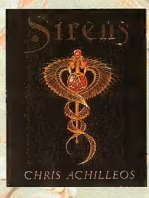

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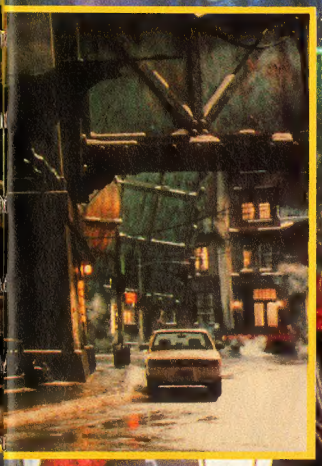

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FATHER of the UNION-SUIT SUPERHERO

BOB KANE discusses Batman Returns, Marilyn Monroe, Hugh Hefner and more!

By TERRI HARDIN

© DC Comics, Inc.

Bob Kane, the inventor of Batman, has had a career that has spanned the entire history of comic-dom, from the mid-30s to the present day. His fame looms as large as the shadow of his creation over brooding Gotham, and his artistic vision, thanks to the popularity of the movie *Batman*, can be seen worldwide. And now as *Batman Returns* hits the theaters, Kane reflects on the highlights of a long and eventful life.

Kane began his comic career in 1936, doing fill-ins for magazines that were reprints of newspaper cartoon strips. After working for his old high-school chum Will Eisner on a variety of gag-cartoon magazines, he went over to DC Comics, where he did more of the same. "I was doing slapstick comic cartoons, just fill-ins. I got $5 a page at that time."

Then in 1938, *Superman* was published to terrific popular acclaim, and what Kane calls "the union-suit superhero" genre was born. Immediately DC cast about for a similar success. "Let's see, Batman was created when I was 18, in 1939. I was in the right place at the right time. There was an editor there, Vincent Sullivan, who asked me one Friday if I could come up with a superhero. On Monday, I had one: The Batman. I came up with a crude drawing of a man with large bat wings attached to his arms. He approved, and we did six pages at $5 a page."

The "union-suit" superhero was unprecedented. "When I created Batman, he was the second one. What came afterwards were thousands of superheroes, but they were all influenced by Superman or Batman. We started the union-suit superhero genre."

As a superhero, Batman was an instant success. Perhaps it was because he was the perfect counterpoint to Superman, who was born with super powers. Batman was a person of average abilities who taught himself to be super. Many could identify with his painful past, and vicariously enjoy the terror he inspired in villains. Even after all these years, Kane can still marvel at the way Batman caught on. "Who would think a bat would become a famous superhero? Because it's really quite scary; most people are afraid of bats.

"Of course, it worked both ways: the gangsters in the fictional underworld were afraid of this huge bat. So he used it to terrify them. He had the advantage as soon as he would swoop down upon them in the night."

With The Batman an instant and ongoing sensation, Kane's salary grew from $20-30 a week in 1939 (which, during the Depression, was really quite comfortable) to an amazing $800 a week by 1941. By that time, Batman had become more than a one-man job. "Batman in comic books had a lot of panels, eight panels to a page. The first year, I did the pencils, the inking, the lettering—I did the entire work. *Detective Comics* only had six pages, then it had 12 pages after the second or third month. And then it went from *Detective Comics* to all-Batman comics a year later, with four stories. Then it went to *World's Finest Comics* (which was a take-off of the World's Fair at that time). In '43, the newspaper strip started, so it became a syndicated newspaper strip as well as a comic book.

"I couldn't do all the work myself. So I would do all the pencils, and I would get somebody to ink and letter the pages. It became an assembly line, which it is pretty much today, and always has been, unless it's a small daily strip of four panels. It's a heavy workload for one man. I had quite a few assistants."

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HA! HA! HA! VERY DROLL! A JOKE... BUT THE JOKE'S ON THE POLICE! HA! HA! HA!
JOKER ESCAPES!
JOKER AT LARGE

© & TMs 1990 DC Comics, Inc. Art by Bob Kane.

Among Kane's assistants were Bill Finger, the writer of the first Batman story and, according to Kane, "the unsung hero of Batman comics," and a young art assistant named Jerry Robinson. While Finger eventually went on to gain fame (and a byline) for creating the Green Lantern in 1940, a famous controversy has arisen between Kane and Robinson concerning certain key characters in the Batman mythos. "I can clear the air for you," says Kane. "I was there, despite what he says.

"Bill Finger was the chief writer, and a good friend of mine. I had an idea for a super villain, and so I kind of created a clown-like character. Bill came over and looked at it. He said, 'It looks too comic. Let me think about it.' Then he came over a week later with a photograph of a German actor named Conrad Veidt. He did a movie called *The Man Who Laughs*. Bill had a couple of stills with the face of Conrad Veidt and Bill said, 'This is the Joker, copy it.' And I did. so Bill and I created the Joker. When the Joker killed somebody, they would die with a ghastly grin from his poison gas.

"Then Jerry Robinson comes along. He was then my assistant doing backgrounds and inking some of the stuff. He was a young kid—17, 18 at the time. He came up with a playing card which looks like a court jester, and he said, 'Why don't you use this card as the Joker's calling card? Then they'll know it's the Joker's work.' So we used the card for that, but the only way I can conclude this, as far as a district attorney in court, is that if Jerry came to me originally, and he had created the Joker, and said, 'Bob, this is the Joker,' then the Joker would look like the jester of the playing card and not like Conrad Veidt. That's my answer to Jerry and to the press and to anybody who wants to know who to believe.

"But he still claims to this day, and will to the day he dies, that he created the Joker. It's always been a bone of contention, but the world will remember Bob Kane, and they won't know from Jerry Robinson. He did OK on his own, he's written quite a few books and he's had some comic things—*Daily News*, he had a panel—but he always wanted to be famous on my coattails, so to speak, otherwise why would he continue to say something that's untrue?"

Even now, the controversy rages on. In several books (including DC's *The Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told* and *The Greatest Joker Stories Ever Told*) Robinson is credited with having refined Batman's style as well as having been in on the creation of the Joker and Robin. Kane responds, "He claims that he created the name from Robinson. And I got it from Robin Hood. I used the tunic and the little booties, and definitely got him from a young, daring Robin Hood. I felt at that time that he [Robin] would appeal more to children, that children would relate to a young boy fighting alongside a superhero 'cause they would put themselves into his image, which they did."

Regarding the invention of such other memorable foes as the Penguin and the Catwoman, Kane says these came from many sources of inspiration. The Penguin was inspired by the then-emblem of Kool Cigarettes, while his umbrella came from [Bill] Finger. Catwoman's feline qualities were

thought to be a natural anthithesis of the bat.

But while Batman continued to inspire and delight throughout the '40s and '50s, a growing trend for gruesome and lurid comic appeared that would significantly impact the whole comic industry.

Using sex and violence to sell products is nothing new, but when these "unwholesome influences" were increasingly directed at America's youth through the comics, the government decided to look into it. Their investigations resulted in the Comics Code Authority, a self-policing censor formed in 1954 by comic publishers. Not unlike Hollywood's Hays Code, its purpose was to keep outsiders from determining what could run in comics. As far as Batman went, Kane remembers, "We had to adhere a bit more strictly to the code by not showing any real violence like too many guns. Batman had a gun in the beginning, for one or two issues, but then we got rid of it. And the Joker became more tame. At one point we would show him murdering people, but it would be off-camera, so to speak. If they were killed, you wouldn't see it. We had to tame it, clean it up a bit to adhere to the code.

"But," Kane adds, "look at the movies today. My God, they're much worse than what we ever did."

Speaking of movies, Batman has had three big-screen incarnations. The first was a movie serial in 1943. "Columbia Pictures did a movie serial on Batman. I came out [to Hollywood] for a while and looked it over. Very low budget. I was standing in front of a gray convertible and I asked the director, 'Where's the Batmobile?' He said, 'You're standing in front of it.' I said, 'Is this the Batmobile? The least you could have done was hire a black limousine to make it a little bit more ominous.'

"Anyway, it was pretty successful because serials were big in the '30s and '40s. And then in 1949, they had another serial [*Batman and Robin*]."

These serials, low quality and awkward as they were, yielded an unexpected dividend. Years later, in the '60s, they formed part of the unique entertainment proffered by Hugh Hefner at the Playboy Mansion. Recalls Kane, "He [Hefner] strung the serials together just for a laugh—13 chapters—which would run 4 1/2 hours, and he would show it. So at the Playboy Mansion, there'd be something like popcorn night and all the little Bunnies would sit around and watch the Batman serials. They'd hiss the villains and cheer for the heroes.

"Somebody was there from ABC, so the story goes, ABC network in NY. and he said, 'Hey,' when we went back to ABC, 'you ought to see what's happening at the Playboy Mansion.' So ABC thought, oh, electric bulb idea, 'Why don't we emulate the old serial as a TV series?' ABC took the chance, and it was a smash hit from day one. The people were enthralled with it; it started the whole 'Batmania' thing. But no one would ever imagine Hugh Hefner—indirectly of course—was the one to thank for the series."

Kane regrets not having gone out to Hollywood at the time of the series. "I always found Hollywood in the early days to be very glamorous. I met Marilyn Monroe when I first came out in '43 and '49, and she was just becoming Marilyn Monroe from Norma Jean. We had a little 'thing' going at that time...we were friends, quote/unquote. I have it in my autobiography.

"I felt that in '66, when the TV show came out, I missed being there, because it was where it was happening. I would have been on the set every day, and would have mingled with all the stars.

"Bill Dozier the producer of the se-

ries came to New York and I told him I'd like to be creative consultant on it. He said, 'Yeah, it sounds like a good idea,' and he went back to Hollywood. And I had so many ties in New York at that time, I suppose I didn't pursue it. I stayed in New York, and I came out to visit here and there, but I should have been there and stayed there. I feel that my career would have gone ahead further.

"I've had a great career and I'm having a great career, but I could have gone into other things. Done some other screenplays and been part of Hollywood. You got to be there to be part of the scene."

In 1989, however, Kane got his wish to be part of Hollywood when he served as consultant for *Batman*. Says Kane, "I wrote the bible which set the direction and blueprint for the script. Not to be cartoony or campy like the TV show, but more dramatic—*mysterioso*—like I created it in the first year, before Robin entered it and lightened it up a bit. They kind of followed my scenario/blueprint and it came out dark and ominous, and you know, and the Joker, of course, is a great villain."

While Kane was enthusiastic over the choice of Jack Nicholson for the Joker, he was considerably less so for Keaton as Batman. "At that particular time, I've said it before, I didn't think Michael Keaton was the typical prototype of Batman. Obviously, the one in the comic book is square-jawed with chiselled features.

"The one I had in mind as an actor for Batman would have been a young Robert Wagner. He was very suave and elegant, great profile and a great body. Barrel-chested. You wouldn't even need a built-up suit—he looked like Batman without it. Just a tight union suit.

"But he was too old, and they call him a 'television actor,' although he starred in movies; but Hollywood pigeonholes you and puts you into little categories. So Michael Keaton was Tim Burton's choice."

Like everyone else, Kane was delighted with the film's success. "The film blew everything through the roof with its massive world popularity, and $450 million that it made in the box office. Fifth-largest grossing film in the history of Hollywood."

Kane also served as consultant for the Batman sequel, *Batman Returns*. "I critiqued the script, and I suggested some things to Tim. I worked on the costumes and the symbol. They had another symbol, they had a big bat head, close-up of a large, black bat head for the symbol, but it looked kind of like a blob, and I suggested that they go back to the original symbol of '89."

"So we're using that, and putting snow on it, because the story takes place at Christmas. Exciting script, and Danny DeVito looks really horrendous in his makeup. You'd think it was Lon Chaney [Sr.]. He'll be very frightening and very tremendous. He's a very good actor. His Penguin is certainly not a cartoon like Burgess Meredith's. And Catwoman is terrific. Michelle Pfeiffer is the Catwoman outfit is very sexy.

"The movie has a dark, brooding atmosphere with some comedic dialogue relief. The dialogue is kind of risqué in certain parts, more adult, I think. It's a very good movie."

© & TMs DC Comics, Inc. Art by Bob Kane.

Now that Kane has retired from DC, Batman has been passed to other hands. One particular interpretation of Batman, Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, has Kane puzzled.

"I think it was very innovative, but I didn't know what he was talking about. The drawings are so far removed from what I drew when I created my style. I try to look at it objectively, that it's being progressive. But basically, I don't think so. I think what happens is that when they change the original drawings, they turn it into their own personality. And in doing that it maligns and distorts the original comic art. I think a ghost artist's job is to emulate the artist they're emulating, instead of redrawing their way. In doing so, they're changing the entire image of the originator's concept.

"At any rate, I didn't understand the storyline too well. Swastikas on a woman's breast and buttocks—I don't know what he's talking about.

"So it became a nouveau art, it brought Batman back into limelight from the campy era. It became more dramatic after that. And the following artist drawing Batman would draw him in a more dramatic tone. Miller helped in that area. I think he's a brilliant man and a brilliant writer and artist, but it looks nothing like Batman and I don't understand the storyline. All in all, I really don't understand Frank Miller, to be candid."

© & TMs 1990 DC Comics, Inc. Art by Bob Kane.

If Kane were doing Batman today, he would be using contemporary issues in the storylines, such as ecology and "more mature subjects. In the early days, we catered more to children, but I think we would now cater more toward adults. Times have changed and you have to change with the times. When we started, everything was more naive, and today the world is more sophisticated. So the stories would be upgraded, but my drawings would probably look the same."

Since his retirement, Kane has penned his autobiography *Batman and Me* (Eclipse Press)—in which he claims to have had an affair with Marilyn Monroe—assisted on movies, and created original lithographs which have been shown around the world. "I've been doing lithographs and they look exactly as I drew them way back in the '40s. I've done them for a few years now. I've had art shows all over the world, and had one on Rodeo Drive a couple of years ago.

"I've done a lot of Batman lithographs. In fact, I'm going to do two new ones, one with Danny DeVito in the makeup as the Penguin, and one with Catwoman. But the Penguin won't look like the comic book one—it will look like Danny DeVito."

As someone once remarked, "Nothing succeeds like success," and Bob Kane has had continuous success throughout his life. So as *Batman Returns* delivers to audiences like Christmas in July, we can expect Kane's unique creation to tantalize and inspire us for many years to come.

THE 10 GREATEST COMIC BOOKS OF ALL TIME!

The 10 Greatest Comic Books of All Time." Sounds like a damned Cecil B. DeMille movie, doesn't it? Like, Charleton Heston parts the Red Sea and there they are! Ten, count 'em, 10 comic books! In 3-mil bags that would protect Dracula himself from the sun's harmful rays! And bleached white backing boards that Arnold Schwarzenegger couldn't bend! Bright colors, bone-white pages, no spine roll, no water stains, no dog-eared edges, no torn covers or cut coupons, no mold, and no (ugh) bug bites! Perfect, mint condition books! Just floating in space.

What would those books be? There are the obvious ones that come to mind. *Famous Funnies* #1. *Action* #1. *Detective* #27. *Fantastic Four* #1. *Amazing Fantasy* #15. And don't forget *Richie Rich* #65 (the first appearance of Dollar the Dog). Okay...just kidding on that last one.

Before we at CS SPECTACULAR stick our necks out and actually attempt to name, by specific issue number, the 10 Greatest Comic Books of All Time, we pause for Disclaimer Identification: Of course this is an impossible, improbable, implausible, impractical, and any other number of "im"-words kind of a task. The 10 Greatest Comic Books of All Time are in your heart. They're in your soul, your mind. Like Keith Richards used to say when the press chided him about the Stones' potentially embarrassing "World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band" moniker: "That honor goes to a different band every night." The greatest comic book of all time is the one that you treasure most. But for the sake of this article, we're going to take an honest whack at this brain-teaser. And we won't cheat you—

THE EXPERTS MAKE THEIR PICKS!

we'll really name 10 books. Title and issue number. No foolin'.

We'll use two criteria. First, we'll consult the experts. We have contacted more than 70 comic-book creators, a cross-section covering every aspect of comic-book production. We talked to editors, writers, pencillers, inkers, letterers and colorists of all ages and statures. You'll find some superstars in our poll for sure, but we didn't just seek out "big names."

The Almighty Dollar serves as our second criteria. If how much cold, hard cash a collector is willing to fork over for a particular book is the ultimate yardstick of its greatness, then so be it. We'll determine the 10 most expensive comic books of all time by monitoring the world famous Sotheby's comic book auction and by consulting the current, hot-off-the-presses *Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*.

After the front-runners in these two criteria are determined, the results will be blended and sifted through for the common denominators, and 10 books will emerge. Again, we're not saying that those of you who love *Little Lulu* #208 (first appearance of Snobbly, Wilbur's brother) aren't perfectly correct in your undying devotion to that book. But these are the 10 we'll come up with. For better or for worse. Take 'em or leave 'em.

But first, let's talk to the experts...Stan "The Man" Lee–a comics legend and creator of the Marvel Universe–has a different "favorite" comic book depending on what day it is.

"Every so often, I'll look through the old ones, or I'll look through a *Marvel Masterworks*, and I'll see a story that I've totally forgotten," Lee says. "And I'll say, 'Gee! Did I write this? This is really great!' You know,

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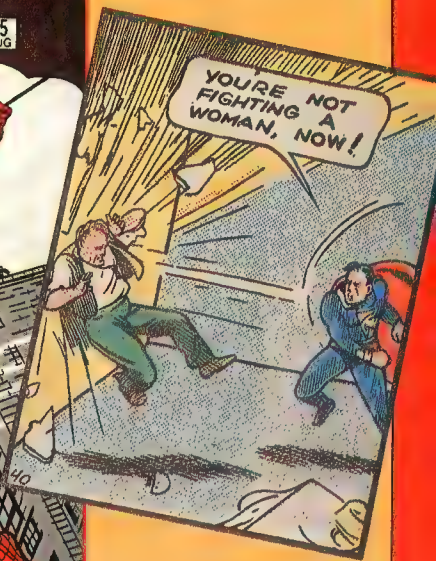
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO YOU, FROM THE EDITOR--ABOUT THE NEW AMAZING!

Spider-Man spun his way onto the comics scene in *Amazing Fantasy* #15. Marvel Comics (and the world) would never be the same.



This panel from *Action* #1 shows the very first time Superman ever "got super" with someone.

© 1962, Marvel Comics.

I'll read it like a reader. And I'll say, 'This is one of my favorites!' And then I'll read another one, and I'll say, 'This is terrific!' There were so many Fantastic Fours and Spider-Mans and Thors and others, and when I re-read them, I think they're absolutely sensational. Of course, a lot of the credit goes to the artist, too."

Lee's choice for the most important comic book of all time? "I would love to say one of our books," Lee sighs, "but I would have to say *Action* #1, which started it all."

Golden age legend Joe Simon—co-creator of Captain America with Jack Kirby—agrees. "I'm not saying that it was great art, or great literature, but *Action* #1 was very important to comic books," Simon says. "As far as Jack [Kirby] and I are concerned, *Boys Ranch* was always our favorite. If I had to put an exact issue number on it, I guess it would be #1, because the first issue of any comic book is always special. The most important book Jack and I ever did would have to be either *Young Romance* or *Captain America*."

Robert M. Overstreet's annual price guide is the bible of comic collectors and dealers (House of Collectibles just published his 22nd edition). "Without question, the most important comic book would have to be *Action* #1," agrees Overstreet. "But it'd be very difficult to choose one book as a favorite. I've collected just about everything all my life, from the current stuff all the way back. What makes a great comic book is the originality of the characters, good, well-plotted stories, good scripts, and good, entertaining artwork.

"I like artists from just about every period. I like Wil Eisner, Alex Raymond, Burne Hogarth. I collected EC's in the '50s, so those artists are among my favorites. I like Wally Wood, Johnny Craig, Al Feldstein. I really love Harvey Kurtzman. I liked Steve Ditko in the '50s, his early Spider-Man and the sci-fi stuff he did for Atlas. I love Berni Wrightson."

Author Ron Goulart has written over a dozen books about comics, including the enormous hardback *Over 50 Years of Comics* (Mallard Press) and the trade paperback *The Encyclopedia of American Comics*

(Facts on File). "The comic book and me started about the same time, I guess, in the 1930s," Goulart says. "By the time things were getting going in the late '30s, I was starting to buy comic books fairly regularly at the local drug store. I was always fascinated by them. In '38, Superman came along and revolutionized what was then a very small business and turned it into a multi, multi-million dollar industry that's still going. Within a year or two, that started the whole superhero thing."

Goulart's choice for the most important comic book? "*Famous Funnies* #1 set the format, and *Action* #1 gave you the superhero," Goulart says. "After that, probably it would be *Detective* #27 with Batman. After that, it would be *Whiz* #2 with Captain Marvel, and probably *Captain America* #1, which was one of the earliest comic books to start off launching a superhero in his own magazine, more or less. I don't think that had been done up to that time."

Goulart believes each comic book fan has a personal "golden age" that is determined by the time in which he or she is born. "That's true in all popular arts," the writer says. "It's where you came in. That's the golden age for you. If you started reading comic books in 1980, then that's your golden age."

Howard Bender is one comic-book artist who also collects comic books. Bender—who has drawn Superman, Archie and co-created (with Craig Boldman) the cult favorite Mr. Fixitt—vents this passion in the pages of *Comic Buyers Guide*, where he draws the strip "Billy and Pop." It's a strip about—you guessed it—comic book collecting. Bender agrees with Goulart that the honor for most important comic book of all time should go to *Famous Funnies* #1.

"It brought the comic strips of the time together in one book, and actually sold it for the first time," Bender says. "It wasn't a giveaway. They knew going in that there would be a profit. So comic books effectively became an industry.

"With *Action* #1, you had these two kids from Cleveland (Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel) who showed their idea to every publisher and were turned down more than once, which is something I can relate to. But after *Action* #1 came out, superheroes caught on like wildfire. Everyone jumped on the bandwagon. There were imitators within milliseconds. And that era gave us a lot of great superheroes that are still around today. Firsts are important because without a first, there wouldn't be a second."

Bender owns 20,000 comic books. "But I don't treasure my most valuable books, necessarily," he says. "Comic books represent milestones in your life. You can hold one up, look at the cover and remember exactly where you were and how you felt the first time you laid eyes on it. It's nostalgia. I don't advocate living in the past—you should live in the present and look to the future—but it's good to be awash in those feelings once in a while.

"It's sad the way the prices of old books go up every year. It makes them unattainable for the people who want to read them. The people who buy valuable comic books are buying them to sell them, to turn a profit. It's a catch-22 situation. The [*Overstreet*] *Price Guide* is good and bad. It's a valuable reference as an index of the history of comics, but it also gives you those prices, which makes it hard to get the books."

Bender's philosophy on the appeal of comic books? "Comics make you use your imagination," the artist says. "You do it alone, unlike watching TV or movies. It's you and only you. You sit down in a quiet place and your imagination takes over. You make the pictures move around. It's magic. It's

Howard Bender says, "Comic books represent milestones in your life. You can hold one up, look at the cover and remember exactly whre you were and how you felt the first time you laid eyes on it."

Photo by Kathy Voglesong.

***Billy and Pop*, from Howard Bender's regular comic strip about comic collecting in the *Comic Buyers Guide*.**

© 1992, Howard Bender.

The Justice League of America first appeared in *Brave and the Bold* #28.

more than TV. And it's an alternative to sitting around watching TV all the time. You're in your own world. It's cinematography of the mind."

Silver Age artist Ross Andru—who pencilled the likes of *Wonder Woman*, *Brave and the Bold*, *World's Finest* and *Marvel Team-Up*—agrees with Bender on that count. "The best comic books are a matrix for the reader's own imagination," Andru says. "The artist shouldn't get all the credit—It's really the fan that completes the fantasy." Andru adds with a laugh: "This is not to denigrate the artist's work, of course."

Jack C. Harris was an editor/writer at DC during the 1970s. Currently, he writes *The Ray* for DC. Harris' choice for the most important comic book of all time is *The Dark Knight Returns*. "It changed the media's opinion of the comic book medium," Harris says. "And it changed people's approach to the characters." Harris also sites a two-part story in *Action* #583 and *Superman* #423 which "tied up all of the loose ends of the '50s and '60s Superman, and effectively ended the series. It said goodbye to Superman's past and paved the way for his future in a way that was absolutely brilliant."

Jackie "The Joke Man" Martling—of Howard Stern's radio and TV shows—is a comics fan who has been known to attend New York comic book conventions as a fan, and occasionally passes along comic knowledge on the air during Stern's radio show (Martling's wife, actress Nancy

© 1960, DC Comics, Inc.

REALLY? LEMME TAKE A LOOK AN' SEE IF I CAN FISH 'EM OUT FOR YA...
OH, EDDIE! GIVE ME A BREAK!
OKAY, MR. OWL, THAT'S EIGHT PRINTS. THEY'LL BE READY IN A WEEK.
EVEN WITH MORE FIRST ARTIFICIAL WONDER ELEMENT-UTONIUM

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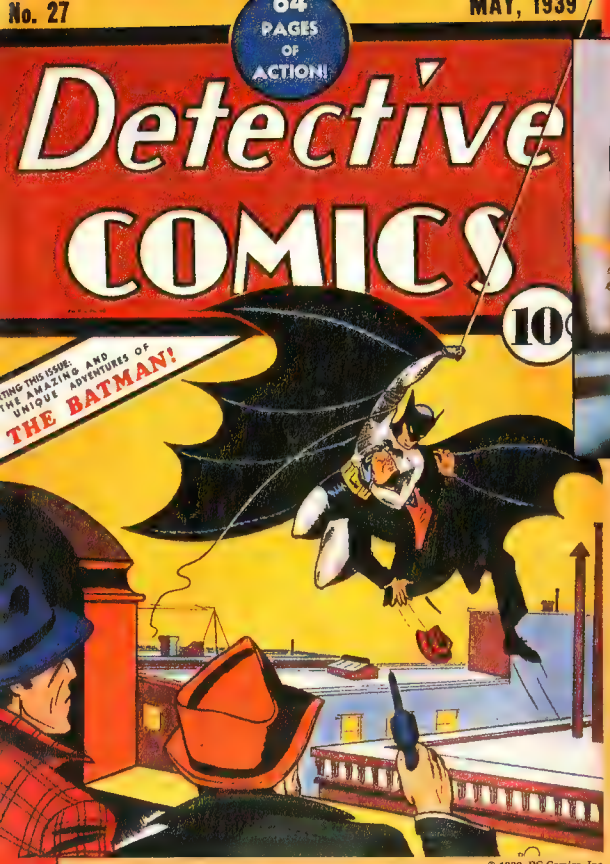
Sirianni, posed for Mariano Nicieza's *Nova Girls* photo comic book series). "I was always a big fan of comics growing up," the comedian says. "I read *Superman*, *Batman*, *Aquaman*, *Spooky*, *Casper*, *Betty and Veronica*, all that stuff. There was a lot of morality in comic books, a lot of morality in Superman stories. I had comics about Jackie Gleason, Jerry Lewis, Bob Hope. Are those things around any more?

"As a matter of fact, I once wrote a whole musical about Archie. At the end of (my video) 'A Safe Distance From Genius,' I sing a song I wrote called 'Betty's Tune,' which is Betty singing to Archie in the play.

"My favorite comic book—I don't know the actual issue number—would be *Uncle Scrooge*. The story title, I think, was 'The Great Steamboat

A panel from Alan Moore's influential super-team graphic novel, *Watchmen*.



The Batman made his debut in *Detective* #27.

© 1939, DC Comics, Inc.

Jackie "The Joke Man" Martling, best known as Howard Stern's sidekick, is a closet comics maniac. He says his favorite all time comic is the issue of *Uncle Scrooge* that featured "The Great Steamboat Race."

Race.' Scrooge and Donald raced against the Beagle Boys. Twenty years later, I saw a Scrooge comic on the shelf. By now, I'm 35 years old. I bought it, sat down to read it, and the strangest thing started happening. As I read it, I was getting this feeling of deja vu. Then at the end of the story, it said, 'Reprinted by popular demand.' I had thought I was losing my mind! So they do make a lasting impression."

Amen!

But hang on, dear reader. We have 63 more experts' minds to tap into. So the remainder of our consult-the-experts segment will done be in poll format. Some notes on the great CS SPECTACULAR Creators' Poll before we dig in: The poll was conducted by mail, by phone, and in person. Each pollee was asked to name his or her all-time personal favorite comic book, and also the one book he or she feels is the most important of all time. The first question yielded answers so varied as to be unchartable. The second question narrowed down the field considerably. Though we preferred specific issue numbers, just titles were accepted. Sometimes a pollee couldn't remember an exact issue number offhand, but supplied clues like: "It's a two-part *Fantastic Four* from the '60s in which Dr. Doom regains his memory and Daredevil makes a guest appearance." In those cases, we made every effort to track down the exact issue number. Multiple answers were accepted. Age was asked (but not always answered). Additional comments made by pollees are presented in parentheses. In most cases, the brief resumes listed were composed by the pollees themselves (which made for some interesting reading).

And awa-a-ay we go!

Name: James Allemje. Age: 27. Known for: Neo #1, Power Unlimited. Favorite comic book: Watchmen #12. Choice for most important comic book: Crisis #8.

Name: Ross Andru. Age: 64. Known for: Penciller, Zen Intergalactic Ninja, Wonder Woman, Marvel Team-Up, Superman Vs. Spider-Man. Favorite comic book: The Amazing Spider-Man. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Howard Bender. Age: 39. Known for Billy and Pop, Mr. Fixitt, Superman, Archie. Favorite comic book: The Amazing Spider-Man #33. Choice for most important comic book: Famous Funnies #1.

Name: Barry Blair. Known for: Co-creator, Elfheim, China Sea, Kimura, Stardusters. Favorite comic book: Maelstrom #11. Choice for most important comic book: Dragonfire #1 ("due to the AIDS awareness message").

Name: Mark Bliss. Age: 34. Known for: From Beyonde. Favorite comic book: Daredevil #1. Choice for most important comic book: Green Lantern #76.

Name: Rick Bryant. Age: 39. Known for: Peter Pan (Eclipse), Rick Bryant Sketchbook. Favorite comic book: Creepy #1.

Name: Brian Buniak. Age: 39. Known for: Caricaturist, Thunderbunny, Mad, The New York Daily News. Favorite comic book: Tintin (two parts), Secret of the Unicorn, Red Rackham's Treasure. Choice for most important comic book: Fantastic Four #39-40 ("From this point on, the entire Marvel Universe was treated more seriously, rather than the 'fun' type stories before").

Name: Paul Catiglia. Age: 25. Known for: Writer, Archie, Little Archie, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Conservations Corps, Looney Tunes, Cracked. Favorite comic book: Plastic Man (Jack Cole version). Choice for most important comic book: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (first printing), The Dark Knight Returns.

Name: Mike Chen. Age: 36. Known for: Teacher, Joe Kubert School; inker, Black Hood, The Elementals, Robotech: The Macross Saga, Starblazers. Favorite comic book: Green Lantern (Silver Age version). Choice for most important comic book: Action #1 ("of course!").

Name: Dan DeCarlo. Known for: Millie the Model, Betty and Veronica, Willie Lumpkin. Favorite comic book: Betty and Veronica. Choice for most important comic book: Superman.

Name: Jay DeMore. Age: 24. Known for: Managing editor, Comic Zone Productions. Favorite comic book: Donald Duck #257. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Kim DeMulder. Age: "Yes." Known for: Inker, Shield, Swamp Thing, Nick Fury. Favorite comic book: Weird Science ("Willi-Fritz!"). Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Mike Esposito. Age: 64. Known for: Inker, Zen Intergalactic Ninja, Wonder Woman, Metal Men, Flash, Marvel Team-Up. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1 ("without hesitation").

Name: Sandu Florea. Age: 45. Known for: X-Force Annual #7. Favorite comic book: Will Eisner's The Spirit. Choice for most important comic book: The Amazing Spider-Man (Steve Ditko version).

Name: Frank Forte. Age: 22. Known for: From Beyonde. Favorite comic book: The Dark Knight Returns. Choice for most important comic book: Heavy Metal #1.

Name: Allen Freeman. Age: 35. Known for: Morgana X, Ralph Snart. Favorite comic book: Amazing Fantasy #15. Choice for most important comic book: Captain America #1 (Golden Age version).

Name: Rick Geary. Age: 46. Known for: National Lampoon, Classics Illustrated's Wuthering Heights, Great Expectations, The Invisible Man. Favorite comic book: Uncle Scrooge. Choice for most important comic book: Mad #1.

Name: Tom Gill. Age: "Senior." Known for: Lone Ranger, Bonanza, HiYo Silver, Fury, The Owl, Tonto, Land of the Giants. Favorite comic book: Lone Ranger, HiYo Silver. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Bill Gilliher. Age: 29. Known for: Jughead's Diner, Little Archie. Favorite comic book: Sugar & Spike. Choice for most important comic book: Jughead's Diner.

Name: Stan Goldberg. Known for: Millie the Model, Archie. Favorite comic book: Archie. Choice for most important comic book: The Amazing Spider-Man #1.

Name: Victor Gorelick. Age: 50. Known for: Longtime editor at Archie Comics. Favorite comic book: Mad. Choice for most important comic book: Archie.

Name: Ron Goulart. Age: 59. Known for: Author, Over 50 Years of Comics, The Encyclopedia of American Comics. Choice for most important comic book: Famous Funnies #1, Action #1.

Name: Bob Haney. Age: "40-plus." Known for: Writer, Brave and the Bold, Batman, Teen Titans. Favorite comic book: American Flag #1. Choice for most important comic book: Superman #1.

Name: Scott Hanna. Age: 29. Known for: Inker, Hawk and Dove, Starman, New Gods, Doc Savage, Detective. Favorite comic book: Green Lantern/Green Arrow (Neal Adams/Denny O'Neil version). Choice for most important comic book: Action #1

Name: Jack C. Harris. Age: 44. Known for: Writer, The Ray, Substance, Kamandi. Favorite comic book: Showcase #11 ("a Challengers of the Unknown story with Jack Kirby artwork that he later swiped from himself") and Tales of Suspense #2 ("with a beautiful Ditko cover"). Choice for most important comic book: The Dark Knight Returns, Action #583 and Superman #423.

Name: Ovi Hondru. Age: 35. Known for: Cover artist, Savage Sword of Conan, Heavy Metal, Hellraiser. Favorite comic book: X-Men. Choice for most important comic book: Captain America.

Name: Steven Hughes. Age: 40. Known for: Artist, Evil Ernie. Favorite comic book: "It's hard to say – so many!" Choice for most important comic book: Watchmen.

Name: Dave Hunt. Age: 49. Known for: Inker, Superman, Superboy, Legion of Super Heroes, Roger Rabbit, Beauty and the Beast. Favorite comic book: Sheriff of the Bullet Valley. Choice for most important comic book: Famous Funnies #1.

Name: Carmine Infantino. Age: 67. Known for: Artist, The Flash, Batman, The Elongated Man, Adam Strange. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Dan Jurgens. Age: 32. Known for: Writer/artist, Superman, Justice League America, Booster Gold; artist, Armageddon 2000, Green Arrow. Favorite comic book: Detective #443 ("Gotterdammerung"). Choice for most important comic book: Fantastic Four #1.

Name: Miran Kim. Age: 23. Known for: Hellraiser (Epic). Favorite comic book: Spider-Man. Choice for most important comic book: Tales From the Crypt.

Name: Joe Kubert. Age: 65. Known for: Founder, Joe Kubert School; artist, Sgt. Rock, Hawkman, Tor, Tarzan, Abraham Stone. Favorite comic book: Tip Top Comics ("it has the earliest Hal Foster Tarzan"). Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Stan Lee. Age: 70. Known for: Creator, Marvel Universe ('nuff said?). Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Joseph Michael Linsner. Age: 23. Known for: Cry For Dawn. Favorite comic book: Savage Sword of Conan #5 ("A Witch Shall Be Born"). Choice for most important comic book: Neverwhere (Richard Corben).

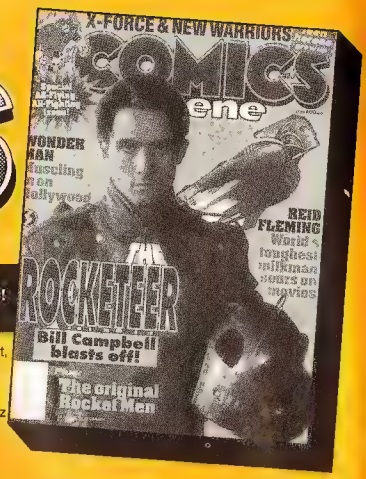
Name: Eric Mache. Age: 40. Known for: Evil Ernie. Favorite comic book: Dick

© 1991, Brian Pulido

The artist for *Evil Ernie*, Steven Hughes, says that *Watchmen* was the most important comic book of all time. Ernie's creator, Brian Pulido, votes for the Galactus trilogy in *Fantastic Four* #48-50.

Photo by Kathy Voglesong.

ON THE COMICS Scene



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Tracy (Harvey version). Choice for most important comic book: "Too specific."

Name: Jim Main. Age: 36. Known for: Publisher, Cat's Paw Comics. Favorite comic book: Avengers Annual #2. Choice for most important comic book: Avengers #4.

Name: Jackie "The Joke Man" Martling. Known for: Standup comedian, writer/performer on Howard Stern's radio and TV shows (and closet comics fan). Favorite comic book: Uncle Scrooge.

Name: Mark Masztal. Age: 28. Known for: Swords of Shar-Pei, Guns of Shar-Pei. Favorite comic book: Ronin. Choice for most important comic book: Watchmen.

Name: Mark McKenna. Age: 34. Known for: Inker, Nomad, The Griffin, Defenders of Dynatron City, Doom Patrol. Favorite comic book: The Killing Joke. Choice for most important comic book: Watchmen.

Name: Joe Monks. Age: 23. Known for: Co-creator, Cry For Dawn. Favorite comic book: Berni Wrightson–Master of the Macabre. Choice for most important comic book: Mad.

Name: Paul A. Mounts. Known for: Colorist, Adventures of Captain America, Marvel Trading Cards, Jim Lee X-Men Cards. Favorite comic book: "One book? Anyone who can answer this is way too anal-retentive." Choice for most important comic book: Brave and Bold #28 (first appearance, Justice League of America; "If not for that, none of all this would be happening today").

Name: James O'Barr. Age: "Questionable." Known for: The Crow, Bone Saw. Favorite comic book: Exquisite Corpse. Choice for most important comic book: Wil Eisner's The Spirit.

Name: Mike Oeming. Age: 18. Known for: Sex in the Sinema #1. Favorite comic book: Sex in the Sinema #1. Choice for most important comic book: Sex in the Sinema #1.

Name: Jerry Ordway. Age: 34. Known for: Writer/artist, Superman, Infinity Inc.; artist, The Batman Movie Adaptation. Favorite comic book: The Amazing Spider-Man #31-33. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

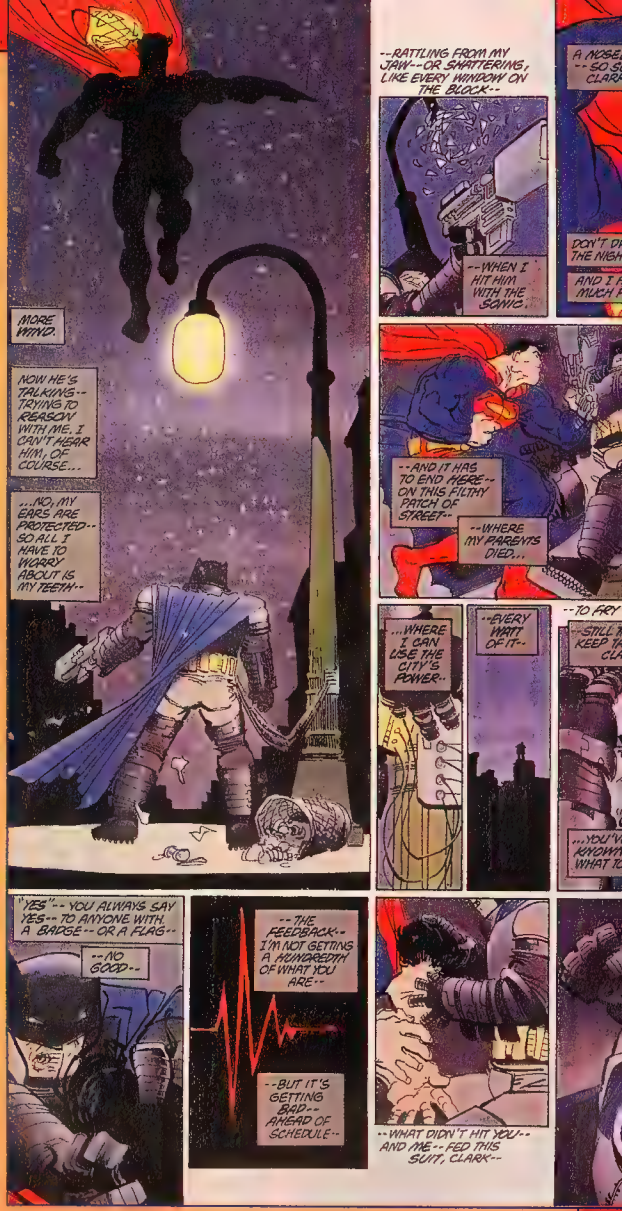
Name: Robert M. Overstreet. Age: 54. Known for: The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Jim Palmiotti. Age: 30. Known for: Punisher, Ghost Rider. Favorite comic book: Batman and the Outsiders Annual. Choice for most important comic book: Ray #11.

Name: Dan Parent. Age: 27. Known for: Arist, Veronica, Little Archie, Archie 3000. Favorite comic book: E-Man. Choice for most important comic book: Jughead's Diner.

Name: Ed Polgardy. Age: 31. Known for: Writer, From the Darkness. Favorite comic book: Batman: Year One. Choice for most important comic book: The Dark Knight Returns.

Name: Adam Post. Age: 21. Known for: Publisher, Personality Comics. Favorite comic book: Gun Fury #8. Choice for most important comic book: Gun Fury #8.


MORE MIND.
NOW HE'S TALKING--TRYING TO REASON WITH ME. I CAN'T HEAR HIM, OF COURSE...
...NO, MY EARS ARE PROTECTED--SO ALL I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT IS MY TEETH--
--RATTLING FROM MY JAW--OR SHATTERING, LIKE EVERY WINDOW ON THE BLOCK--
--WHEN I HIT HIM WITH THE SONIC...
--AND IT HAS TO END HERE--ON THIS FILTHY PATCH OF STREET--
--WHERE MY PARENTS DIED...
...WHERE I CAN USE THE CITY'S POWER--
--EVERY WATT OF IT--
--TO FRY
"YES"--YOU ALWAYS SAY YES--TO ANYONE WITH A BADGE--OR A FLAG--
--NO GOOD--
--THE FEEDBACK--I'M NOT GETTING A HUNDREDTH OF WHAT YOU ARE--
--BUT IT'S GETTING BAD--AHEAD OF SCHEDULE--
--WHAT DIDN'T HIT YOU--AND ME--FED THIS SUIT, CLARK--

The unmistakable style of Frank Miller in *The Dark Knight Returns*, a graphic novel that will influence the comics industry for years to come.

***Funnies on Parade* was the first comic book ever! It was a Proctor & Gamble giveaway in 1933.**

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Name: Brian Pulido. Age: 29, Known for: Creator/writer, Evil Ernie. Favorite comic book: Warlock 5, Marshall Law. Choice for most important comic book: Fantastic Four #48-50 (the "Galactus" trilogy).

Name: Sal Quartuccio. Age: 39. Known for: Publisher, Quality Comics. Favorite comic book: Fantastic Four #45 ("Among Us, The Inhumans"). Choice for most important comic book: Amazing Fantasy #15.

Name: David Quinn. Age: 32. Known for: Faust #5. Favorite comic book: Faust #5. Choice for most important comic book: Faust #5 ("Sorry...no modesty").

Name: Derrick Richardson. Age: 25. Known for: X-The Hot One, Forbidden Fruit. Favorite comic book: Crisis On Infinite Earths. Choice for most important comic book: Watchmen.

Name: John Romita Sr. Age: 62. Known for: Penciller, The Amazing Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Captain America. Favorite comic book: The Amazing Spider-Man #121 (the death of Gwen Stacy). Choice for most important comic book: Fantastic Four #1.

Name: George Roussos. Known for: Inker, Fantastic Four, Batman, Metal Men. Favorite comic book: Fantastic Four ("the very early Jack Kirby ones").

Name: Kurt Schaffenberger. Age: 71. Known for: Artist, Captain Marvel, Superman, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1 ("without a doubt").

Name: Julius Schwartz. Age: 76. Known for: Editor, Justice League of America, Batman, Superman. Favorite comic book: Action #1. Choice for most important comic book: Showcase #4.

Name: Joe Simon. Age: 76. Known for: Writer/artist/co-creator (with Jack Kirby), Captain America, Boys' Ranch, Newsboy Legion. Favorite comic book: Boys' Ranch #1. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Siobhan. Age: 35. Known for: Artist/writer, Pepgirlz. Favorite comic book: Coochy Cootie's Men's Comics #1. Choice for most important comic book: Mad #1.

Name: Bob Smith. Known for: Inker, DC's Robin miniseries. Favorite comic book: Batman #395 ("with an early Neal Adams story entitled 'Secret of the Waiting Grave'"). Choice for most important comic book: Detective #27.

Name: Tom Sniefoski. Age: 30. Known for: Swords of Shar-Pei, Guns of Sharpei, Gutter Rat, Taboo. Favorite comic book: Saga of the Swamp Thing #19. Choice for most important comic book: Watchmen.

Name: Roger Stern. Age: 41. Known for: The Incredible Hulk, Doctor Strange, Spider-Man, Captain America, The Avengers, Superman. Favorite comic book: The Amazing Spider-Man #31-33. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Greg Theakston. Age: 38. Known for: Publisher, The Human Powerhouse, The Betty Pages. Favorite comic book: New Gods #4. Choice for most important comic book: Action #1.

Name: Lawrence Van Abbema. Age: 30. Known for: Writer/artist, High Times (Marijuana Bud strip), Squatter Comics, World War III. Favorite comic book: Zap #1. Choice for most important comic book: Fantastic Four #1.

Name: Ivan Velez. Age: 30. Known for: Creator, Tales of the Closet. Favorite comic book: Miracle Man. Choice for most important comic book: Sandman.

Name: Tim Vigil. Age: 33. Known for: Co-creator, Faust, EO. Favorite comic book: Faust. Choice for most important comic book: Faust.

Name: Mark Voger. Age: 33. Known for: Writer/artist, strips in Fangoria #68, 100, Gorezone #7, Toxic Horror #2, 3, 4, 5. Favorite comic book: Metal Men #22-23, The Amazing Spider-Man #42-43 ("both are two-parters"). Choice for most important comic book: Detective #27, Fantastic Four #1.

Name: Glen Whitmore. Age: 25. Known for: Colorist, Superman, Adventures of Superman, Action, Man of Steel. Favorite comic book: Justice League of America #21-22 ("Crisis on Earth One," "Crisis on Earth Two"). Choice for most important comic book: Showcase #4.

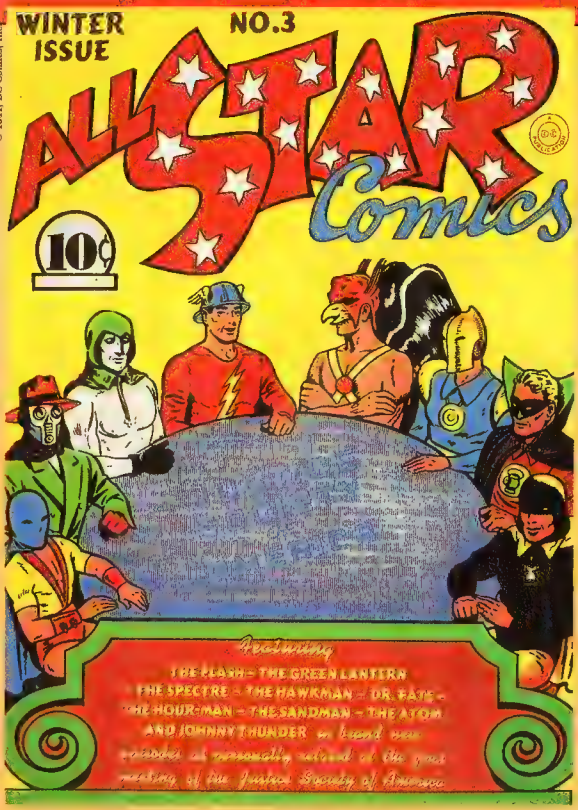
Name: George Woodbridge. Age: 60. Known for: Longtime Mad magazine artist. Favorite comic book: "What's a comic book?" Choice for most important comic book: "Anything by Al Williamson."

Name: Berni Wrightson. Known for: Artist, Swamp Thing, The Weird, The Cult, Frankenstein. Favorite comic book: Haunt of Fear #27. Choice for most important comic book. Haunt of Fear #27.

Name: Mark Wynne. Age: 24. Known for: From Beyonde. Favorite comic book: Hard Boiled #2. Choice for most important comic book: From Beyonde.

Evil Ernie looks like he needs a good hot meal—you know, something that'll stick to his ribs!

© 1991, Brian Pulido.



© 1941, DC Comics, Inc.

The first team of superheroes was presented in *All-Star Comics* #3.

And the front runners are...*Action* #1—historically significant as the first appearance of Superman (and the book that started the superhero craze in the first place)—is the clear winner of CS SPECTACULAR's Creators' Poll, with 9.2% (13 votes out of 71) of the tally. Alan Moore's groundbreaking, revisionist superhero mythos of 1986, *Watchmen*, comes in second with 3.5% (5 votes out of 71). Third place honors go to *Fantastic Four* #1 (Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's prophetic 1961 collaboration, which heralded the Marvel Universe), with 2.8% (4 votes out of 71). Tie for fourth and fifth place with 2.1% each (3 votes out of 71) are *Famous Funnies* #1 (the first comic book ever sold, released in May of 1934, featuring Mutt and Jeff, Joe Palooka, Tailspin Tommy, etc.) and *The Dark Knight Returns* (Frank Miller's brooding graphic novel of 1986, that puts a bored, angry Bruce Wayne in the future). Tie for sixth, seventh and eighth place with 1.4% each (2 votes out of 71) are *Detective* #27 (Batman's 1939 debut), *Mad* #1 (EC's 1952 humor comic book that metamorphosized into an American institution) and *Showcase* #4 (the first-ever Silver Age comic book, which featured a revamped Flash in 1956).

Now...it's time to talk money. Back in December, world famous Sotheby's held its first-ever comic book auction in New York City. Featured on the block were many mint-condition comic books (some in sets) and original artwork. In all, 265 "lots" were offered for sale; a total of $1.2 million was made. The auction catalogue itself was an elegant affair—a full-color hardback with 170 pages on glossy stock (sold to potential bidders for $35), which included a history of comics and artist biographies.

We now present the 10 most expensive comic books that were sold at Sotheby's comic book auction on December 18, 1991:

1. *Detective* #27 - $55,000. 2. *Action* #1 - $29,700. 3. *Marvel Comics* #1 - $28,600. 4. *Detective* #2 - $16,500. 5. *Batman* #1 - $15,400. 6. *The Amazing Spider-Man* #1 - $15,400. 7. *Whiz Comics* #2 - $9,900. 8. *Detective* #18 - $8,250. 9. *More Fun* #54 - $8,800. 10. Three-way tie: *Detective* #1 - $7,700; *Fantastic Four* #1 - $7,700; *Amazing Fantasy* #15 - $7,000.

On to the *Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. No doubt, you readers of CS SPECTACULAR have recently held the 22nd edition in your hot little hands, with its beautiful Spider-Man cover pencilled by Mark Bagley and painted by Silver Age Spider-Man artist John Romita Sr. (a participant in our poll). Or maybe you picked up Overstreet's all-new *Official Grading Guide*, with its special paper-grading card (featuring 10 paper samples, from bright white to dingy and brittle). The release of the annual price guide is always one of the most anticipated events of the year for tried-and-true comic book collectors. We now present the 10 most expensive comic books, as seen in the 22nd edition of the Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide:

1. *Detective* #27. 2. *Action* #1. 3. *Marvel Comics* #1. 4. *Superman* #1. 5. *Whiz Comics* #1. 6. *Batman* #1. 7. *Captain America* #1. 8. *All-American* #1. 9. *All-American* #16. 10. *Detective* #1.

Photo by Kathy Voglesong.

Artist Tom Gill of the Golden Age, who participated in our poll, is best known for his art in *The Lone Ranger*.

© 1938, DC Comics, Inc.

***Action* #1 featured the first appearance by Superman, which ignited the superhero craze.**

And now for the final stage in our ultra-scientific system to determine the 10 Greatest Comic Books of All Time—the blending and sifting of all compiled data. The creators poll results were given precedence over the monetary information (after all, if so many people voted for *Watchmen*, it had to rank high even though it's not a "vintage"—hence, astronomically priced–book). But pricing could be used as a tie-breaker (where rank within the top 10 is concerned), or as a special consideration (for instance: *Marvel Comics* #1—the 1939 book featuring the debuts of the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner—did not place in the poll, and yet it ranked third at both Sotheby's and in the Overstreet guide).

Ready? So are we! Here goes nuthin'...We now present...drum roll, puh-leeez...in order of rank...the 10 GREATEST COMIC BOOKS OF ALL

THE 10 GREATEST COMIC BOOKS OF ALL TIME!

1- Action #1
2- Detective #27
3- Watchmen
4- Fantastic Four #1
5- The Dark Knight Returns
6- Famous Funnies #1
7- Mad #1
8- Showcase #4
9- Marvel Comics #1
10- Batman #1

So, what have we learned? Well, for one thing, popularity contests are a bitch. There's a reason we asked the comic creators their personal favorites as well as their choices for the most important comic books. Because, as we said at the outset (and are now saying again), the greatest comic book of all time is the one you treasure most. We hope you, too, made a choice for your all-time personal favorite comic book (remember: we prefer specific issue number, please). And now, ask yourself why you made that choice.

Did that issue blow your mind as a child? If so, does it still pack the same wallop today? Was it a vintage issue you read about in the history books and finally got a chance to experience first-hand, either in reprints or by holding and cherishing the (gulp!) real thing? Is it a brand new book you just picked up this year, this week, yesterday? Do you love the story, the artist, the character, the colors?

We learned that firsts are important (for without them, as Howard Bender points out, "there'd be no seconds"). So *Famous Funnies* #1 first gave us the comic book, and *Action* #1 first gave us the superhero, and *Detective* #27 first gave us a superhero with a dark side, and *Marvel Comics* #1 gave us some alternative superheroes, and *Showcase* #4 gave us new a superhero based on an old superhero, and *Fantastic Four* #1 gave us superheroes who didn't get along with each other. And on and on.

The high scores won by *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns* are also telling. These books aren't yet even 10 years old, but their shock waves are still being felt throughout comicdom. Read *Dark Knight*, and then watch the 1989 film Batman, and see for yourself how much Frank Miller's graphic novel influenced Tim Burton's film. Now, observe the prevalent "dark style" of today's comic books, and you'll realize how much of an effect both Miller's book and Burton's film had on the whole of the medium.

For comic books are history. A writer's words and an artist's lines are married on paper and frozen in time. There they remain for us, a world of imagination to visit again and again.

WHEW! This sure got heavy, didn't it?!

—Mark Voger

THE HEAVENLY BODIES OF COMICS

Summer fun special!

By MASKED SUPER SCRIBE

Savage jungle beauties in leopard-skin bikinis swinging through the trees! Tough, flashy gun molls who'd just as soon burn down a cop as their hoodlum boyfriends! Masked femme vigilantes who crack down on crime without ever getting so much as a run in their stockings!

That's how it used to be, back in those golden days before 1954, before the comics industry was gutted by the Supressives and shackled by the Comics Code. Gone are the days of the Jungle Queens (Sheena, Taanda, Rulah, etc); the Gun Molls (see any crime comic); and the Masked Glamour Girls (Black Cat/Black Canary—who, though coming from different shops, were essentially the same character, except that Black Cat was a redhead and Black Canary a blonde). Delightful characters all, gone now, except in reprints. And what do we get to replace them, here in the '90s, which has been officially declared (by us), as The Decade That Nobody Likes? Any retrograde T & A cheap thrills to be found in the avalanche of comics fodder which keeps coming down the pike?

Art by and © Dave Stevens.

Dave Steven's trick-or-treat special for the cover of *Seduction of the Innocent!* #1 makes us feel like a goblin!

Art by and © Dave Stevens.

The *Space Vixens* are such good pilots, they can keep this machine up for hours without stopping to refuel!

Excalibur's Shadowcat and Phoenix model the latest swimwear in the 1992 *Marvel Swimsuit* issue. Art by Adam Hughes.

Art by and © Joe Dunn & Nick Anastasio.

Here's a woman who likes BIG bikes and BIG guns, from *Neon City* #1.

Val Cooper and Madrox TM & © 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

A preview of X-Factor's Val Cooper and Madrox the Multiple Man in the 1992 *Marvel Swimsuit* issue! Art by George Perez.

An aroused native gets to the point of the matter in *Jungle Girls* #3.

FACT: The industry is still recovering from the Massacre of 1954. Prove it to yourself: compare the print run of a pre-Code title like, say, *Crime Does Not Pay* with most of today's pop titles, and you'll find that with very few exceptions, the oldtimers sold more. Worse, the Massacre stunted comics, artistic growth. What had been a medium predominantly geared to teenagers and young adults was amputated into the provenance of subteenagers circa post-'54. Now, some 40 or so years later, (with certain notable exceptions) mainstream comics have managed to crawl back to the pubescent level.

Which goes a long way toward explaining why, when you start looking for "Heavenly Bodies of the Comics," you must look hard. THE VAST MAJORITY OF COMIC BOOKS ARE ADOLESCENT POWER FANTASIES INVOLVING BIG GUYS WHOMPING ON EACH OTHER.

Which is not necessarily bad, but is surely a fact. But there's a kind of "no girls allowed" Boy's Club mentality permeating the milieu, a reflection of the adolescent mentality of much of the readership. Big guys whomping other big guys is pretty straightforward stuff (well, actually there's a homo-erotic sado-masochistic component buried in the subtext there, but that's a subject for another time). What's wanted is more big babes whomping on other big babes.

Now that we've rattled your cages with these preliminary remarks, in a desperate attempt to stir up controversy and, even more important, BIG SALES for this mag, let's take a quick survey of what comicdom's Lovely Ladies are up to in this Summer of 92:

© Marvel Comics

Jim Lee's portrait of Storm in *Marvel Illustrated* has us wishin' for some rocky weather!

Among the rites of Spring are the first robin, Opening Day at the ballpark, and the *Sports Illustrated* "Swimsuit" issue. This year, in the first of what will no doubt become an annual event, a feminist

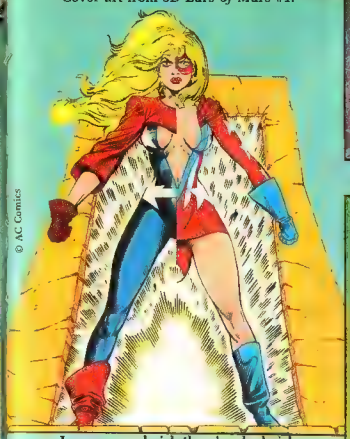
Art by Murphy Anderson. © Eclipse Comics.

Cover art from *3D Lars of Mars* #1.

Art by and © Joe Chiodo.

The body that launched a thousand rockets, from *Alien Worlds 3D* #1.

Batman & Catwoman TM and © DC Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. Art by J.J. Birch & Michael Bair.



© AC Comics

In every good girl, there's a bad girl trying to get out, as was evidenced in *Fem Force* (issues #44-50).

pressure group picketed the publishers of *Sports Illustrated* for running the Swimsuit issue. "Everybody's got an angle," as Angle Man used to say in the old *Wonder Woman* series. The funniest thing in the whole brouhaha is how dumb *Sports Illustrated* readers are. They go gaga over the Swimsuit ish (always a top seller), yet somehow fail to make the connection that the newsstands are filled with magazines featuring nothing but beautiful women, often wearing nothing at all, and not having to share space with annals of jockola antics!

Now it's summer, time for *Marvel's Swimsuit* ish. But you don't find the House of Ideas leaving open a

Stardust, Nightveil, Ms. Victory and She-Cat making both love AND war!

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A va-va-voom gallery!

The "Mother of Demons" is a new Marvel character, a major villainess of the "Rise of the Midnight Sons" crossover in Ghost Rider and related titles this summer. Penciled by Andy Kubert, inked by Adam Kubert.

© AC Comics.

Synn-Girl From LSD flashes her Pepsodent smile!

© AC Comics.

Mullet of Doom TM & © 1992 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

hatch for the so-called "politically correct" types to lob a rocket into. No, Marvel wisely features both male and female characters in its Swimsuit issue, thus providing wholesome entertainment for the entire family. In fact, according to editor Bobbie Chase, since Marvel's male leads encompass a greater variety of body types than the femme stars, (compare and contrast, if you will, Hulk and She-Hulk, for example), many artists prefer to depict the males doing their surfside thing. Male or female, the Swimsuit issue is so popular with Marvel artists that there isn't enough space to accommodate all those who want to participate in the project. The readers like it, too. It's a big seller and sure to be an annual event.

Hot babes are even hotter when they're in the jungle!

As you can see, their *Swimsuit* issue is witty, good-natured fun. Buy two copies. In addition to originating and editing the Swimsuit issue, Ms. Chase is also the editor of the current run of *Ghost Rider*. Supernaturalism must be her strong suit (not swimsuit), since she will be honchoing Marvel's forthcoming *Midnight Sun* imprint. Set in the same spectral milieu as *Ghost Rider*, the new titles are *Spirits of Vengeance*, *Morbius*, *The Living Vampire* (who could break out big in this Anne Rice era); *Darkhold*; and *Nightstalkers* (*Tomb of Dracula* vampire-hunters form detective agency). Buy 'em all. Twice.

She-Hulk's pretty good, too, with a much-welcome light touch.

Over at DC, it's a BAT-summer what with *Batman Returns*. Batman's back, and Catwoman's got him.

The original Catwoman was a pet shop owner who committed masked "cat crimes" to vex Batman, on whoms he had a crush. A '40s forerunner of today's obsessive fans, who stalk their idols because they just "love them to death." In the latest take on Catwoman, as revisioned by Frank Miller, she's a rough trade hooker turned night-prowling Fury. The prototype Catwoman wore a catmask, cape, mini-dress, boots, and carried a cat-o'-nine-tails. The current one wears a catmask, bodysuit, and comes equipped with retractable Wolverine-style claws. There's a lot to be said for both versions.

Catwoman Defiant is DC's summertime tie-in to the Batman movie and should be in the stores as you read this. *Catwoman: Her Sister's Keeper*, collected in graphic novel

Art by Myke, © Malibu Graphics, Inc.

Fetish alert! This cover art for *Spicy Tales* #4 contains one whip, one chain, lingerie, high heels, bare feet, and rats! A little something for everyone, huh?

Determined to know Wonder Woman's embrace, Heracles readies her by drug and chain.

Wonder Woman TM & © DC Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. Art by George Perez.

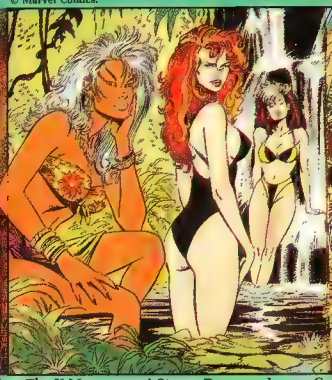
Art by Kirk Jarvinen & Jason Moore. © Randy Zimmerman

There's more than one way to get a head in the world, you know!

© Marvel Comics.

Art by Brian Stelfreeze © Marvel Comics

She-Hulk on the cover of the first *Marvel Illustrated* swimsuit issue!

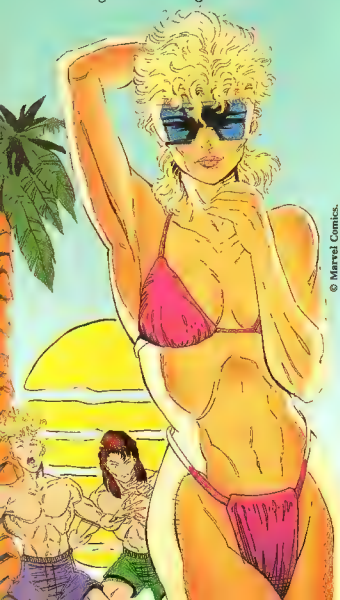


The X-Men women! Storm, Rogue and Psylocke share a nature bath.

Crystal and her sister Medusa from the first *Marvel Illustrated* swimsuit issue.

format, continues the story begun in *Batman: Year One* and is worth having. *Batman: Year One* is, of course, essential. Look for Catwoman Classic (you know, like Coke Classic) in DC's hardcover archival collections.

Wonder Woman's getting a new makeover, since her most recent incarnation has been pretty much of a non-starter. *Ms. Tree* had a baby, resulting in an infant-in-jeopardy plot in her latest number. Hey, maybe she'll wind up as a private eye *Lone Wolf*, toting the kid along on cases.



© Marvel Comics.

Tabitha in a bikini wins our unanimous approval!

Buxotic babes in masks and tights abound in AC Comics *Femforce* and its various spinoffs. The Film II Company announces a *Femforce* movie in the works. Hey, how'd you like to be the casting director on that one? Also forthcoming from the AC/Film II coalition is *Dawn Hunter*, starring co-producer Lois Hamilton in the titular role. The action spy thriller is being partly bankrolled by the Russkies (no lie!) in a novel international co-production deal. Bill Black will supervise the publishing of a *Dawn Hunter* comic drawn by Russian artists and translated into five languages. We won the Cold War and we didn't even get a lousy T-shirt! The age of *globalismo* is truly upon us...

The indefatigable Mr. Black also continues to be the most esoteric reprinter in the industry. *Jungle Girls* features the likes of Sheena, Nyoka, Tiger Girl, Camilla and Congo Queen and other jungle jaunts from the Forties & Fifties. *Amazon Warriors*, collecting some of the great Bob Powell's *Cave Girl* stories, has gone into another printing. *Good Girl Art Quarterly*'s has Matt Baker's *Phantom Lady*. Western fans, be sure to check out AC's extensive line of reprints, such as *Jesse James*, *Lash Larue*, *Roy Rogers*, many others.

Speaking of reprints, Russ Cochran keeps on coming with his line of all-color EC reprints. Artists Wood, Craig, and I-don't-get-no-respect Jack Kamen are particularly adept at delineating the female form. EC's writers (well, writer, actually, since Al Feldstein handled the lion's share of the scripting chores) frequently, one might almost say obsessively, deal with the themes of lechery and adultery. Seems like one out of every four stories is about one spouse trying to do in the other. Of course, being EC comics, it usually winds up with the decedent being fed into the garbage disposal or some other ghastly fate (if it's a crime story), or returning from the dead to deliver some payback (if it's a horror story). Which is as far from the fanboy mentality as you can get, thank God. Forget about the lechery, nowadays you can't even find a decent crime comic, which is just one more reason (as if any were needed) to hate the '90s.

See you at the beach. Hope that ozone layer holds out... CSS

Tigra enjoys some wet fun in the sun.

© Marvel Comics.

HOLY POLYSTYRENE!

Superhero and Comic Book-based Model Kits

By DAN CZIRAKY

During the model kit explosion of the 1960s, buying a model kit of your favorite superhero or comic book character was as easy as buying a quart of milk. Most five-and-ten stores carried at least a few of the plastic kits of such popular superheroes as Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, etc. Aurora, that near-legendary model company that is most famous for its movie monster kits, was the wellspring for most of the comic book models. Like their monster kits, each included the hero in an action pose, with a diorama-like base. Superman burst through a wall of brick and steel; Batman swung from a tree branch, his trusty Batarang held high; the Penguin lunged with his deadly sword-umbrella; Superboy fended off a dragon emerging from a cave, the faithful superdog Krypto at his side. These were just some of the plastic scenarios that could be glued together and brightly painted, then left to sit on a shelf and collect dust.

Today, these models are expensive collectors' items, fetching well over $200 at toy shows. Considering their original prices of between 98¢ to $2.98, these kits are well out of the price range of the average modeler. Besides, Aurora went out of business in 1975. While Monogram Models was able to purchase some of Aurora's molds, many were left out in the open air, and the elements quickly reduced them to scrap-metal. Some of the Aurora kits were reissued by Monogram in the late '70s and early '80s, and snap-together kits of such Marvel Comics characters as Spider Man and the Hulk were added to the line. Now, even these kits are rare.

Unless you're content to stick with stock car or war plane modeling, the hobby has become quite expensive. Figure kits are not popular enough to interest the large American companies, so foreign manufacturers and small "garage kit" companies have become the main source of superhero and comic book kits.

Hulk ™& © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. Photo courtesy Horizon Hobbies and Toys.

Hulk is sick and tired of puny humans! Horizon's sculpting now allows for more detail.

The Silver Surfer and Iron Man have been available since 1988.

Horizon Hobbies and Toys of Los Angeles has become the front-runner in the superhero kit area, with a full line of kits based on Marvel Comics characters. Their 1/6-scale, posable, vinyl figures are highly detailed. Figures of Spider Man, The Punisher, Iron Man, and the Silver Surfer have been on the market since 1988. As the company grew, other figures were added. Horizon's sculpting now allows for more detail on such kits as The Incredible Hulk, The Thing, Doctor Doom, Wolverine, and Dark Phoenix, but some of the posability of the figures has been sacrificed. A 1/5-scale Captain American figure was produced to coincide with the character's 50th anniversary. Horizon also released a 1/6-scale, posable kit of Michael Keaton as Batman, their only DC Comics character to date. Their RoboCop and ED-209 kits are also very popular with modelers, even if Marvel's *RoboCop* title was cancelled last year. *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* has inspired three Horizon figures—a T-800 Arnold Schwarzenegger, the T-800 Endoskeleton, and the T-1000 (featuring extra parts to create variations of the "liquid metal" killer). These kits should be popular with fans of both the film and Dark Horse's monthly book.

Horizon's friendly-neighborhood Spidey is posable, vinyl and highly detailed.

Screamin' Products, Inc., of Albany, NY, is notorious for their 1/4-scale horror movie figures. These large, vinyl kits are a detailer's dream, as their 18"-20" sizes allow for all sorts of personal variations in painting and assembling. Many of their modern movie monsters have their own comic books

Spider-Man, Silver Surfer & Iron Man TM & © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. Photo courtesy Horizon Hobbies and Toys.

Batman TM & © DC Comics, Inc. Photo courtesy Horizon Hobbies and Toys

This 1/6-scale Michael Keaton Batman is Horizon's only DC figure to date.

Classic Plastic, another company known primarily for their monster kits, has entered the realm of comics with a pair of *Terminator 2* kits. Their T-800 and T-1000 kits are 12" tall, resin replicas cast in action poses. The interlocking bases create a battle diorama. Those who enjoyed Marvel's *Darkman* movie adaptation will want Classic Plastic's highly detailed kit, which features two heads—one swathed in bandages with his wide-brimmed hat, the other featuring his hideous scars.

© Carolco. Photo courtesy Horizon Hobbies and Toys

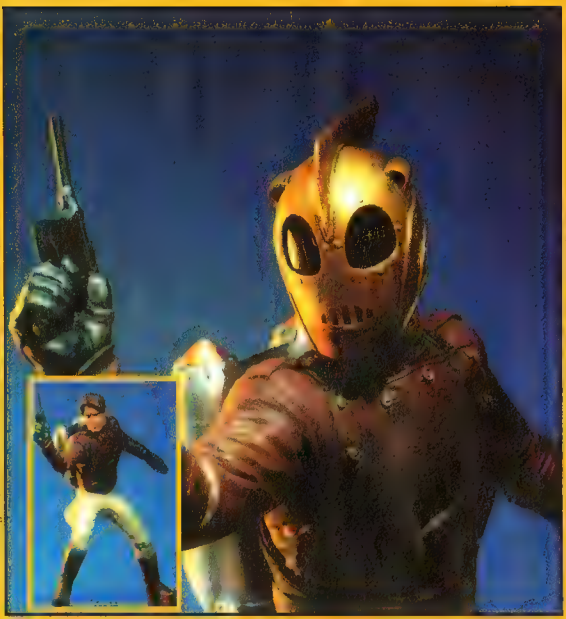
***Hasta la vista, baby!* Schwarzenegger in a mean mood, from Horizon.**

now, including Freddy Krueger (Innovations' *Nightmare on Elm Street*), Leatherface (Northstar's *Leatherface* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* books), and Elvira (DC's *Elvira's House of Mystery* and Marvel's *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* movie adaptation). For fans of Marvel's *Hellraiser* book, Screamin' has the Pinhead and Chatterer Cenobites, as well as a full-scale Lament Configuration puzzle box. Dave Stevens' *The Rocketeer* makes an exciting kit, complete with removable helmet. Role-playing gamesters can add Screamin's Red Dragon kit, direct from the pages of DC's *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, to their collections.

Lunar Models' *Lost in Space* diorama retails for $119.95.

This 1/5-scale Captain America has been issued by Horizon to commemorate the character's 50th anniversary.

Thing, Captain America TM & © Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. Photo courtesy Horizon Hobbies, and 1993



Rocketeer TM & © The Walt Disney Company. Photo courtesy Screamin' Products Inc.

The Rocketeer model kit from Screamin' Products is 1/4-scale (over 18" tall), has a removable helmet, transparent eye holes and a fully-detailed rocketpack!

Fans of both Irwin Allen's *Lost in Space* TV-series and Innovation's comic book will want to contact Lunar Models of Rowlett, TX. They have several variations on the Jupiter-2 ship, as well as accessories and crew figures. There are two versions of the TV Batmobile available, as well as *The Green Hornet*'s Black Beauty. Lunar makes other science-fiction TV series vehicles, and offers a resin figure of Vincent from *Beauty and the Beast*.

Halcyon Models of England features a line of kits from the movie *ALIENS*, including the Armored Personnel Carrier (APC), Drop Ship, Power Loader (with Ripley figure), and an Alien Warrior (with base and egg). Halcyon models are available at most hobby shops and several mail-order companies.

Billiken, the Japanese company known for its movie monster kits, has an American division based in Hawaii. They now offer a beautifully detailed *Predator* kit, as seen in Dark Horse comics (and the recent *Batman vs. Predator* DC/Dark Horse crossover series). Billiken offered two versions of the Michael Keaton Batman and one of Jack Nicholson's Joker, but these kits were licensed for Japan only. Some hobby stores do stock imported kits, and they are often for sale at comic book conventions. Most of Billiken's vinyl kits are posable, and are usually in 1/6-scale.

As the popularity of Japanese *manga* and *anime* continue to grow, the availability of model kits based on characters and vehicles will increase in the United States. Horizon offers vinyl kits of Yuri and Kei from *The Dirty Pair* (now a comic book from Eclipse Comics), and Billiken has many kits of this type, including two *Ultra Man* kits licensed for U.S. sales. It would take another article to examine these kits in depth, but more are being imported by larger hobby shops all the time.

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME! Ben Grimm in 1/6-scale.

Because the cost of these kits are high by the standards of your average, mass-produced, injected-molded polystyrene kits, figure kits tend to be purchased by adults. When you're spending upwards of $30 dollars on a kit, you don't just glob on the glue and slap a little paint on these things. Many modelers are over 25, and spend hundreds of dollars (and hundreds of hours) on the hobby. Hopefully, the large American companies will recognize the growing numbers of figure modelers, and begin reissuing the old kits. Monogram experimented with reissuing four of the old Aurora monster kits in special "neon color" editions last year. If they are big sellers, we may yet see the old Spider-Man and Superman kits at low prices.

MODEL COMPANY ADDRESSES:

Billiken U.S.A., 1126 12th Avenue, Suite 105, Honolulu, HI 96816.

Classic Plastics, P.O. Box 236, Bensalem, PA 19020.

Horizon Hobbies and Toys, 428 Boyd, Los Angeles, CA 90013.

Lunar Models, 5040 Grisham, #102, Rowlett, TX 75088.

Screamin' Products, Inc., P.O. Box 6577, Albany, NY 12206.

A COMIC BOOK TOO FAR

A COMICTOONS PARODY STARRING:

JOE BURNS
FANATIC FAN OF COMIC BOOKS

PROFESSOR BOMAR
GENIUS/INVENTOR

CANDY LISSIUS
GRATUITOUS "BAD GIRL"

WHADDAYA, *CRAZY?!!*

DON'T THROW MY *BOOKS* AROUND, MAN!

YOU WON'T BE *NEEDING* THEM ANY MORE, JOE MY BOY!

STORY AND ART:
'MAD MARK' VOGER
WITH LOVING HOMAGE TO (AND SWIPES FROM) STEVE DITKO, STAN LEE, ROSS ANDRU, MIKE ESPOSITO, BOB KANIGHER AND CHESTER GOULD!

(DISCLAIMER: THE CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY AREN'T *REALLY* SUPPOSED TO BE WHO YOU THINK THEY ARE! IT'S ALL FOR *LAUGHS*, SEE? "*A PARODY*," LIKE MAD MAGAZINE OR "SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE"! OKAY . . *GOT* THAT?

OKAY, PROF! YER *GRATEFUL* THAT I SAVED YER LIFE! * BUT . . .

. . . AND, AS PROMISED, I'M PAYING YOU BACK IN *GRAND FASHION!*

* AS EXPLAINED IN THE YET-TO-BE-PUBLISHED *ORIGIN* STORY!
– 'MANIC MICHAEL' BENSON

I ASKED YOU YOUR *FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITY!*

SINCE *MISS LISSIUS* ALREADY FULFILLS YOUR #1 CHOICE . . .

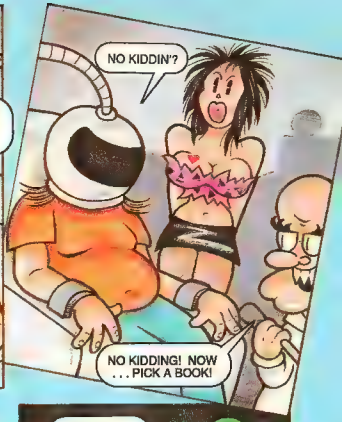
. . . *I* SHALL FULFILL #2!

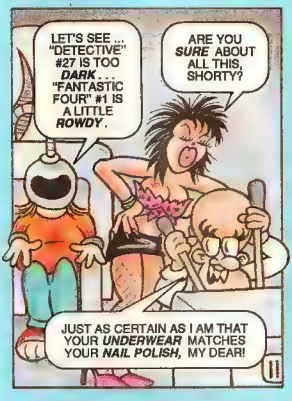
BEHOLD . . .

THE COMIC-TRONIC 9000!

GET IN THE *CHAIR,* JOSEPH!
BUT . . .
QUICKLY! WE'RE ALREADY ON PAGE *TWO,* AND WE HAVE A *LOT* OF GROUND TO COVER!

THROUGH THIS *SCANNER,* I'VE FED EVERY PAGE OF *EVERY COMIC BOOK YOU OWN* INTO THE COMIC-TRONIC . . .
NOW, PUT ON THE *HELMET* . . .
AND YOU WILL EXPERIENCE YOUR FAVORITE COMIC BOOKS IN *OVERWHELMINGLY REALISTIC, COMPLETE 3-D SURROUNDMENT!*


NO KIDDIN'?
NO KIDDING! NOW . . . PICK A BOOK!


LET'S SEE . . . "DETECTIVE" #27 IS TOO *DARK* . . . "FANTASTIC FOUR" #1 IS A LITTLE *ROWDY*.
ARE YOU *SURE* ABOUT ALL THIS, SHORTY?
JUST AS CERTAIN AS I AM THAT YOUR *UNDERWEAR* MATCHES YOUR *NAIL POLISH,* MY DEAR!

WHA . . .?
X-RAY SPECS, MISS LISSIUS!
"AMAZING FANTASY" #15!

SO BE IT!
WHEN YOU GET TO THE *"OTHER SIDE,"* YOU'LL BE WEARING A *CHESTER GOULD-INFLUENCED TWO-WAY WRIST TV,* WITH WHICH YOU'LL BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND . . .
AMAZING DETECTIVE
AMAZING FANTASY
AMAZING GHOST STORIES
HAVE A NICE *TRIP,* JOSEPH! HA, HA, HA, HA,HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA!

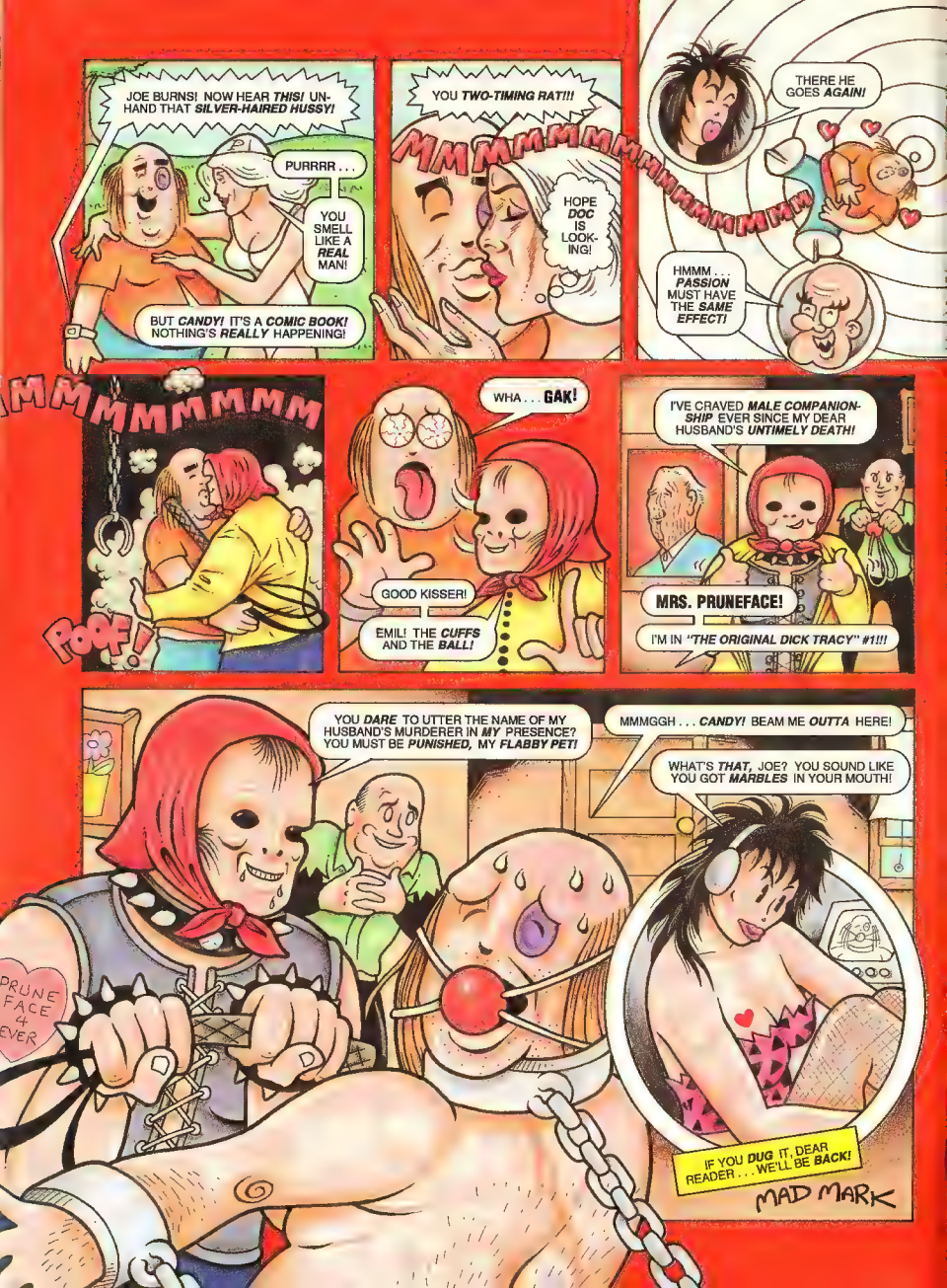
IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE . . .
AAAAAAAAGHH!
BEN! COME *QUICK!* THERE'S A *FAT, GRUNGY MAN* IN THE KITCHEN!
AUNT MAY!
POOF!

WHAT *IS* IT, DEAR?
HOW DID YOU KNOW MY *NAME?*
ER . . . I'M A FRIEND OF *PETER'S!*
YEAH . . . *THAT'S* IT!

WHY DIDN'T YOU *SAY* SO?
HAVE A STACK OF *WHEATCAKES,* SON!
DON'T MIND IF I *DO!* GOT ANY *SYRUP?*

DO WE HAVE SYRUP?
PAPA TAPS IT HIMSELF FROM OUR MAPLE TREE OUT BACK!
NOW, DON'T YOU BE TELLIN' PETEY YOU SAW THIS HERE MICROSCOPE! IT'S A SURPRISE!
MUNCH . . . IT'S A . . . SLURP . . . SURPRISE . . .
ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS TRIP HIM!
UP!
I GOTTA GO!
DID WE INSULT THE BOY?
PTOOO!
MAYBE THE SYRUP WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIM!
STOP! THIEF!
GOTTA FIND THAT TV STUDIO . . . STOP THAT BURGLAR!
WHAT'S THE HURRY, MAC?
WHOOPS!
F-F-FLASH!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU KNOW MY NAME, BUDDY, BUT YOU SURE LOOK OUT OF PLACE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD WITH THAT LONG HAIR! WHAT ARE YOU . . . A PURSE SNATCHER? A PREVERT?!
I OUGHTTA BE ONE O' THOSE COSTUMED HEROES!
POP!
OOF!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
APPARENTLY, VIOLENCE TRIGGERS DIMENSIONAL CROSSOVERS!

"BUT WHERE WILL HE GO NEXT?"
MEANWHILE, IN AN ALTERNATE UNIVERSE . . .
DOC! WE'RE BEING HIT BY A STRANGE RAY!
AND IT'S CHANGING US INTO HUMANS!
GREAT SCOTT! I'M TURNING INTO . . . A ROBOT!
SUDDENLY:
OH, MAN I HURT!
WHO'S THAT?!
M-MAYBE HE C-CAN EXPLAIN!
POOF!
THE METAL MEN IN HUMAN FORM! I'VE STUMBLED IN-TO ISSUE #22!
BUT DOC! NOW (SOB) I'M A FLESH-AND-BLOOD WOMAN . . .
YOUR TEARS ARE RUSTING ME!
THAT PLATINUM LITTLE MINX SURE LOOKS HAPPENING IN HER HUMAN FORM!
HEY, TINA! WHERE ARE YA RUSHING OFF TO, SUGAR?
A HUMAN MALE!
MAYBE I'LL PLAY UP TO HIM . . . AND DOC WILL BECOME JEALOUS!
NO PLACE, NOW THAT I'VE LAID EYES ON YOU, TIGER!
HEY! WHAT'S HE UP TO?!
A LITTLE CREATIVE ROLE-PLAYING, MY DEAR!


JOE BURNS! NOW HEAR *THIS!* UN-HAND THAT *SILVER-HAIRED HUSSY!*
PURRRR . . .
YOU SMELL LIKE A *REAL* MAN!
BUT *CANDY!* IT'S A *COMIC BOOK!* NOTHING'S *REALLY* HAPPENING!
YOU *TWO-TIMING RAT!!!*
MMMMMMMMMM
HOPE *DOC* IS LOOK-ING!
THERE HE GOES *AGAIN!*
MMMMMMMMMM
HMMM . . . *PASSION* MUST HAVE THE *SAME EFFECT!*
MMMMMMMM
POOF!
WHA . . . **GAK!**
GOOD KISSER!
EMIL! THE *CUFFS* AND THE *BALL!*
I'VE CRAVED *MALE COMPANION-SHIP* EVER SINCE MY DEAR HUSBAND'S *UNTIMELY DEATH!*
MRS. PRUNEFACE!
I'M IN *"THE ORIGINAL DICK TRACY" #1!!!*
YOU *DARE* TO UTTER THE NAME OF MY HUSBAND'S MURDERER IN *MY* PRESENCE? YOU MUST BE *PUNISHED,* MY *FLABBY PET!*
MMMGGH . . . *CANDY!* BEAM ME *OUTTA* HERE!
WHAT'S *THAT,* JOE? YOU SOUND LIKE YOU GOT *MARBLES* IN YOUR MOUTH!
PRUNE FACE 4 EVER
IF YOU *DUG* IT, DEAR READER . . . WE'LL BE *BACK!*
MAD MARK

SCHWARTZ! KANIGHER! INFANTINO! LEE! KIRBY!

THE TRUE HEROES OF COMICS

FATHERS OF THE SILVER AGE

By MARK VOGER

Just what was this Silver Age of Comics? Historians generally agree the Silver Age began in 1956 with *Showcase* #4, and ended in 1969 with the advent of the 15-cent comic book. This takes us from the Eisenhower administration, through JFK, LBJ, and Tricky Dicky. A lot of change. The whole of American society changed during that time.

In '56, all was right with the world. The general who won World War II for us was now home, safe, and running the country. Suburbia was exploding everywhere. A new entertainment medium—television—was keeping everyone home; families were getting to know each other again. The post-war baby boom was in full swing. And, in 1956, comic books were wholesome. Dr. Frederic Wertham and his army of concerned parents had run those nasty, bloody, psychosis-inducing comic books out of town. Now, only good comic books remained. Comics that reflected trends of the times. Westerns. Sci-fi. 3-D. TV and movie adaptations. Good, wholesome stuff that Ward Cleaver would be proud to have Wally and the Beaver read.

But by 1969, America was a whole, new ball game. The nation was divided over a war—Vietnam—and a president—Nixon. Drugs, free love and loud, trippy rock reigned at music festivals like Woodstock and Monterey Pop. Draft cards were burned. Slogans like "Stop the war!" "Off the pigs!" and "Turn on, tune in, drop out!" were familiar refrains at college campuses. Comic books suddenly reflected this psychedelia and rampant unrest. By 1969, the Silver Age was no more.

Yes, comic books changed between 1956 and 1969. The Comics Code Authority-imposed wholesomeness of early Silver Age books was responsible for their naivete and wide-eyed, innocent wonder. But as the "Marvel

Showcase #4, which featured the debut of a revamped Flash, is generally considered the first comic book of the Silver Age.

Fantastic Four
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
1 NOV.
10¢
I--I CAN'T URN INVISIBLE ST ENOUGH!! OW CAN WE STOP THIS CREATURE, TORCH?
JUST WAIT AND SEE, SISTER! THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT!
FEATURING: "THE THING!" "MR. FANTASTIC!" "HUMAN TORCH!" "INVISIBLE GIRL!" TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!
THE THREE OF YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE! IT'S TIME FOR THE THING TO TAKE A HAND!
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN ROPES TO KEEP MISTER FANTASTIC OUT OF ACTION!
© 1961, Marvel Comics.

The second most important comic book of the Silver Age, and the birth of the Marvel Universe, was *Fantastic Four* #1.

Age" built steam, super characters became more human, and yet, more majestic. Some memories from the giddy blur: DC's "go go" checks; the unfreezing of Captain America; the Batman craze of '66 ("Holy merchandising!"); Dr. Doom; teen-age heroes like Peter Parker and Robby Reed; psychedelic heroes like Hawk and Dove and the "new" Wonder Woman; "IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!"; the unending neighborhood debate—"Who's better, Marvel or DC?"; buying comics at a drug store or a soda fountain; the animated cartoon series, *Marvel Super Heroes*; the Lois Lane-Lana Lang rivalry; Mary Jane Watson's first words: "Face it, tiger, you've just hit the jackpot!"

For the aging baby boomers who bought and read comics during the Silver Age, those books survive as a powerful source of nostalgia. For today's comic-book readers (the Copper Age? the Cubic Zirconia Age?), those books provide a history lesson. How did Spider-Man get his powers? Read *Amazing Fantasy* #15. Where did the Guardians come from? Read *Green Lantern* #40. Why did the X-Men form? Read *X-Men* #1. How did Metamorpho get that way? Read *Brave and the Bold* #37. What did Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson do on their first date? Read *The Amazing Spider-Man* #43.

(Or, of course, you can read the reprints. Recently, DC released its *Silver Age Classics* line, and Marvel its *Milestone Editions* line; all are affordable, quality reprints).

And so it was that in 1956, DC's *Showcase* #4 introduced the new Flash, the first Golden Age super hero to be revamped. The book is credited as the first Silver Age comic book. Five years later, Marvel put out *Fantastic Four* #1, which introduced the "Marvel Age of Comics," and is called "one of the two most important and influential comic books of the Silver Age (along with *Showcase* #4)" by Gary M. Carter in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*'s 20th edition (Carter also wrote the Silver Age profile for Sotheby's comic book auction catalogue).

Clearly, *Showcase* #4 and *Fantastic Four* #1 are the books that charted the course for the Silver Age of Comics. *Showcase* #4 was edited by Julius Schwartz, written by Robert Kanigher and pencilled by Carmine Infantino. *Fantastic Four* #1 was edited and written by Stan Lee, and pencilled by Jack Kirby. These gentlemen comprise a veritable, five-man Who's Who of Comics, and COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR has tracked them all down.

All but one are in their seventies (Infantino is 67). Coincidentally, the DC guys all still live in New York, while the Marvel guys both migrated west to California—now, what does that mean? And yes, there are some disputes among them over who created what. We've presented their viewpoints on this touchy topic when they were offered, but did not take sides. After all, we weren't there. We don't know. All we know is that Schwartz, Kanigher, Infantino, Lee and Kirby are responsible for thousands of classic comic books that have brought us countless hours of entertainment and wonder. Books that will be here long after they are gone. We salute these gentlemen for their contributions to the art that is comic books. And now, in their own words, we present five men who were present at the Dawn of the Silver Age.

Julius Schwartz

Sci-fi?!" Julius Schwartz mock-growls. "Don't ever use the word 'sci-fi' in my presence! Do you know who Harlan Ellison is? Do you know how he defines 'sci-fi'? He says it's the sound of two grasshoppers mating."

So, there.

Now, just who is this Julius Schwartz, and what makes him such a sci-fi...er, pardon me...science fiction purist?

Comic books fans know Schwartz as the influential editor who helped usher in the Silver Age of Comics when he helmed DC Comics' *Showcase* #4 in 1956. This historically significant book—which featured a revamped version of the 1940s super hero the Flash (created by Gardner Fox during the Golden Age)—is responsible for reviving dormant reader interest in super heroes, comic historians unanimously agree. For during the 1950s, all super hero comic books—save for those that starred mainstays Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman—had been cancelled. Comics—and super heroes in particular—were in a slump. And then along came *Showcase* #4.

Other accomplishments on Schwartz' resume include founding the *Justice League of America*, introducing the multi-Earth concept to comics, revitalizing DC's two ailing Batman titles (he edited *Batman* and *Detective Comics* throughout the Batman craze of the 1960s), making Superman relevant, and much more.

"But I've got to tell you the truth," Schwartz, 76, says. "Until I got a job at DC Comics in 1944, I never read a comic book in my life." Schwartz spoke with CS SPECTACULAR in an interview conducted recently in Manhattan.

Julius Schwartz was born in 1915 in the Bronx, New York (when he says "turtle," it comes out "toitle"). He toiled in science fiction pulp magazines—once serving as literary agent to the likes of Ray Bradbury and Robert Bloch—before arriving at DC in 1944. There, his passion for science fiction became a major influence on comic book storytelling policies.

"My whole youth was spent reading science fiction and getting involved in conventions, which I helped start," Schwartz says. "So when I did the comic books, my slant was to do science fiction types of things. I wanted explanations for things.

"It's unfortunate that Superman was created by a couple of fellas (Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster) who knew nothing about science. Because, it would have been impossible for that baby to be shipped in a rocket, sent off into space and conveniently land on the planet Earth, when they didn't even know about the planet Earth. It's three-quarters water! So I tried to have a sound, scientific basis for my science fiction-type comics, which would include *Green Lantern*, *Flash*, *Adam Strange* and the two science fiction magazines that I did, *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery in Space*.

"I would put editor's notes explaining what the science aspects were all about. Many of my former readers come to me and say I helped them get through their science courses in high school."

After Schwartz struck newsstand gold with his revamped Flash in *Showcase* #4, he went about resurrecting other forgotten DC super heroes in *Showcase*, such as Green Lantern, Hawkman and the Atom. These revamped heroes had the same names and powers, but new costumes and secret identities. (During the Golden Age, Flash's costume resembled mythology's Mercury, and his alter ego was named Jay Garrick. But the Silver Age Flash wore a sleek, red jumpsuit designed by penciller Carmine Infantino, and in Robert Kanigher's script, his alter ego was named Barry Allen).

To explain the two Flashes, two Green Lanterns, etc., Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox came up with the dual-Earth concept. "It went back to the time the first (Silver Age) *Flash* came out," Schwartz explains. "When Barry Allen got his super-speed, he wanted to know what could he do with the super-speed. Then he remembered that when he was a youngster, he read a magazine called *Flash Comics*. So he said, 'That's it! I'm going to call myself the Flash, get a uniform and do what my idol Jay Garrick—the original Flash—did!' In working on a story, it came to me all of a sudden that...wouldn't it be neat if this Flash that we were dealing with in 1960 met the original Flash?

"I said to Gardner Fox, 'Why don't we put him in a similar Earth, that's way in advance of ours?' In science fiction, they have concepts that are called alternate Earths. I said, 'Why don't we create an alternate Earth, and we'll call that one the other Earth. We'll call it Earth Two.' Which was a horrible mistake on my part, because it should have been called Earth One. It was the first Earth. The Earth that (the Silver Age) Flash was operating on should have been Earth Two, not Earth One.

"If we knew 30 years later we'd be asked these questions," Schwartz says, laughing, "we'd have paid more attention to what we were doing! It came out of nowhere, so to speak."

Schwartz' next triumph was reviving the super-team concept. Earth

Julius Schwartz, the editor of *Showcase* #4, faces the hot kliegs of TV's *Entertainment Tonight*.

Photo by Kathy Voglesong.

This is the house ad that ran in DC Comics in 1960, announcing their new title, *Justice League of America*.

One's version of the Justice Society of America (DC's 1940s team that included the likes of Dr. Fate, Hawkman, Wonder Woman, the Spectre, Hourman and the Flash) was renamed the Justice League of America. The JLA debuted in *Brave and Bold* #28 (DC's other springboard title) in 1960. The first JLA lineup featured Flash, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, J'onn J'onnz the Martian Manhunter (considered the first original Silver Age hero) and Aquaman. DC's top two—Superman and Batman—would join the team in later lineups, but weren't on hand for the team's first adventures.

Remembers Schwartz: "(Then-*Batman* editor) Jack Schiff and (then-*Superman* editor) Mort Weisinger felt that Superman and Batman were being overexposed. They asked me not to put Superman and Batman in the Justice League, which I followed. You didn't see them. They might have made a guest appearance, but they certainly didn't appear on the cover.

"Later, when the magazine started to slip, I went in to the publisher and I said, 'Gee, I'd like to use Superman and Batman on the cover.' He said, 'Why didn't you use them all along?' I said, 'Because Mort and Jack wouldn't allow me to.' He said, 'You go in and tell those sunuvubitches that Superman and Batman belong to DC Comics, and not to Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff!'"

In 1964, DC assigned Schwartz to edit *Batman* and *Detective*, due to those titles' downward-spiraling newsstand sales. Starting with issue #327 of *Detective*, Schwartz brought in penciller Infantino and inker Murphy Anderson, which brought about what Schwartz dubbed the Dynamic Duo's "New Look." The bat logo on Batman's chest was surrounded by a yellow oval for the first time during this period.

The resulting revived interest in the character influenced ABC-TV to produce the Batman series in 1966. But the TV series was done in a "camp" style, and before long, editor Schwartz was ordered to mirror that style in DC's Batman titles.

"I'm not going to name names," Schwartz says, "but the publisher felt that since the Batman TV show was going so fantastically well, that those who saw the television show and then bought the magazine *Batman* would want something similar. If they got it with the dark, moody flavor, they might be disappointed.

"I'm not going to say it was a direct order. 'Constructive advice' is a better way of putting it. I was advised to follow the camp approach of the television show. Of course, when the camp fever died on television, it also died in the book, and we had to start over again. And that's when I brought (writer) Denny O'Neill and (artist) Neal Adams into it, and got Batman back the way he should have been."

As DC entered the '70s, Schwartz took over the Superman titles from editor Weisinger, a boyhood friend (and fellow science fiction fanatic). Weisinger's Superman existed in a gee-whiz, childlike awe-filled universe with endearing, cartoonish characters like Mr. Mxyzptlyk, Krypto and Professor Potter, and fanciful plot devices like red Kryptonite, the bottle city of Kandor and the Phantom Zone.

But the times were changing, and so were comic books.

"Actually, I didn't know what Mort had been doing with *Superman*," Schwartz says. "Mort just did things the way he saw them. He edited *Superman* for 30 years, and then I edited *Superman* for 17, so between the two of us, we sort of controlled Superman's destiny. I have a feeling Mort never read *Superman* after I took it over (Weisinger died in 1978). I never consulted with him. The agreement was, if I take over *Superman*, I could do it my way."

Schwartz' way was to mirror the times, and so Superman lost some of his powers (and gained some personal problems). Clark Kent quit his long-held reporter's job at the Daily Planet to become a TV news anchorman at Galaxy Broadcasting. "I updated him, made him more relevant," Schwartz says. "You've got to make a change. Give it a new look. When I reintroduced Batman, didn't I call it the 'New Look?'"

But one thing that Schwartz didn't change about Superman was his aversion to a certain green, glowing, alien element. "And incidentally," the editor notes, "Kryptonite was not invented by Mort. It was invented for the radio program.

"Bud Collyer—who played Superman and Clark Kent on radio—had a two-week vacation coming to him. He was going to leave the show, which was broadcast every day for 15 minutes. And they said, 'You can't leave! Who's going to play Superman?' Bud said, 'It's not my problem—let your scriptwriters solve it.'

"So what the scriptwriters did is invent Kryptonite. They said because it came from the planet Krypton, it was radioactive. When it came close to someone who was born on the planet, it would weaken them terribly. So they worked out a story in which the villains got ahold of some Kryptonite, brought it close enough to Superman so he would collapse, and they threw him in a store room and went about their criminal activity.

"So for two weeks, all you heard from Superman was 'Ughhhh! Ughhhh! Ughhhh!'

"And the rest...is history."

Robert Kanigher

Write it hard!" were Robert Kanigher's last words, rather than a more typical farewell. "Don't write a fairy tale!"

But then, Kanigher's work in the often-formula-bound realm of comic book writing has been anything but typical. He's written stories about unrequited love between a "female" robot and her inventor in his sci-fi soap opera, *Metal Men*. He had Wonder Woman being pursued simultaneously by the half-fowl Bird Man and the half-fish Mer Man, a love triangle right out of Todd Browning's *Freaks*. He had Easy Company's guns narrate the action in *Our Army At War*. And he once turned Lois Lane into an African American in a story entitled "I Am Curious (Black)." Not your average, run-of-the-mill, set-'em-up-and-knock-'em-down comic book stories.

Robert Kanigher is also one of comicdom's most prolific writers, rivaling if not surpassing the output of Stan Lee. "Stan Lee?" Kanigher responds. "Stan Lee had his name plastered over every goddamn story. For at least 15 years, I was writing anonymously, because (DC) didn't put our names down."

You guessed it. This is not going to be a love-in. Kanigher is as irascible as his *Metal Men* character Mercury (though perhaps as brilliant as Doc Magnus). He is certainly a distance from the saccharine, "Uncle Bob"-type who answered all of that fan mail with the temperament of Santa Claus in the letters pages of his DC mags, signed simply "RK." Interviewing the real Robert Kanigher, now in his seventies, feels something like having a final conference with a college professor who you know is going to fail you.

We turn back the clock to the mid-1950s, when the comic book industry was still reeling from controversy spearheaded by psychiatrist Frederic Wertham's book, *Seduction of the Innocent* (subtitle: *The Influence of Comic Books on Today's Youth*) and the resulting senate inquiry, which lead to the formation of the Comics

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Wonder Woman #154 was edited and written by Robert Kanigher.

Code Authority. Horror was outlawed, super-heroes were in deep freeze and television was growing more and more powerful, coaxing away more and more potential comic book readers. In three words: business was bad. In 1956, DC answered with *Showcase*, a tryout title with rotating and one-shot characters.

"I was the one who created the idea of *Showcase*," Kanigher tells COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR. "Julie Schwartz chooses not to remember, so he says some unknown genius suggested it. What I did—it was at an editorial conference—I said, 'Let's have a magazine called *Showcase*. There are approximately seven editors here. All we have to do is present a new *Showcase* every month with each editor contributing a new character. So each editor would have, let's say, one-and-a-half books a year to do. And the readers will go wild, because every month they'll get a new character, an entirely new series. And the next month, there'll be another one and another one.' I said, 'Something is bound to catch on.'

"I created the *Frogmen* (*Showcase* #3). That was the first one that went up. Then Schwartz asked me to do a Flash. We plotted maybe five or six minutes. In this particular case, I didn't even know who was going to draw it. I started off with Barry Allen. Schwartz telling you about 'Barry' and 'Allen' being Steve Allen and one other guy on talk shows (Barry Gray)—that's a lot of shit.

"I used the name Flash because I didn't want to waste time thinking up

a new name. You know, Gardner Fox originally created the Flash, the Jay Garrick Flash. But I disregarded everything. I started it with Barry Allen in a police laboratory, and I blew him apart with an explosion. With any other medium except comics, he would have to be scraped off the wall. But no one objected to it at all. They accepted it as perfectly natural that his atomic structure was completely rearranged.

"Now, how did he get his uniform? Alex Toth recently kidded in Robin Snyder's magazine (*Robin Snyder's History of Comics*). He said, 'How does the uniform get back? Who washes it? Does Superman grab it, go into a telephone booth and wash it and give it back to the Flash?' No. I said it was very simple. First of all, when I was a kid on Washington Avenue in the Bronx, we used to shoot crap in a basement. The janitor's wife got angry because she appeared naked to us when she brought us coffee, and nobody looked up from the floor where we were playing crap.

"Anyway, this rabbi's son who played with us was a pulp writer. He told me that there was a pulp character called the Crimson Clown. Probably *Streaky Smith* or one of those huge conglomerate pulp magazine publications. And the Crimson Clown had a ring. When he pressed a spring on the ring, out came the Crimson Clown uniform, which expanded in the air. That's where I took it from. To answer Alex Toth—how does the costume get back?—I invented my own this time. It's very simple. One press of the spring, out catapults the uniform, expanding in the air. Two presses of the spring, and it reverses itself! It comes back again, diminishing in size until it fits in the ring."

In Kanigher's view, there's no question but that he created the Silver Age Flash. "Of course I did!" the writer says. "You must understand something about Schwartz. Schwartz is obsessive because he hasn't created a single word or a single line or a single character, so he goes around asking people to write about him." (Kanigher says that he and Julius Schwartz shared an office at DC for over 20 years; their desks were back-to-back).

But no one disputes the fact that Kanigher created one other title that debuted in *Showcase*: *Metal Men*. The cult characters—which are still revived on occasion by DC (they faced off with Metamorpho in a two-part *Justice League Europe* in 1990)—are a quirky team of shape-shifting robots with human personalities. "What happened," Kanigher recalls, "was that on my way out one Friday evening, Irwin Donnenfeld came to me and said, 'I know it's not your turn to do *Showcase*, but none of the other editors can come up with an idea. Ya got anything?' I said, '*Metal Men*.' I said, 'Metal robots with human characteristics that retain their metal characteristics simultaneously.' And he said, 'Do it.' That's all.

"Now, I knew nothing about chemistry. I know very little about science, I'm ashamed to say. I saw a book called *The Science Dictionary* on Julie's desk. It was a battered, old edition. I gave myself about an hour crash course on the nuclear-metallurgical signs and the properties of each metal. For instance, I learned that gold could be hammered out to a distance of 1,000th of a human hair, and stretched out to one mile. Well, that gave me all the freedom in the world to do whatever I wanted to do! And I learned that tin and iron merged together were stronger than steel. So I used that.

"So then I put (the character) Tin in, and I felt that Tin was the lowliest metal. How can I show that Tin was the lowliest metal? I give him an inferiority complex. How can I show an inferiority complex? I give him a stutter. That's the way my brain works. I had to have a woman, a female. So I made Platinum the female. Called her Tina. And Platinum firmly believes that she's not a robot, that she's human. And she just as firmly believes that her inventor doesn't realize that he's in love with her. The only thing I knew about Mercury was that it's in a thermometer. When your temperature's high, it shoots up. When it's low, it goes down. So I made him the cranky one. People love him. He shoots up and down and he thinks he should be the leader of the group and so forth."

Kanigher's metal band debuted in *Showcase* #37 in 1962. The strip was illustrated by Kanigher's stalwart penciller-inker team from *Wonder Woman*, Ross Andru and Mike Esposito. After three more consecutive appearances in *Showcase*, the Metal Men were given their own magazine in 1963.

"I wrote *Metal Men* free hand, free mind," Kanigher says. "I was winging it. No plotting. You had to be completely free, you had to be completely uninhibited to do it." Andru and Esposito stayed with the title for the first 29 issues. Gil Kane filled in for two, and then Mike Sekowsky took over until the title's death in 1969 with issue #41. By then, Sekowsky himself was writing the stories, which had the robot team adopting human identities and getting involved in international espionage. "It went downhill when I left," Kanigher now says. "They tried to do things with it they should never have done. Because they don't know what's in my mind.

"When I left my desk after 22 years, I left it for a reason that they will never find out."

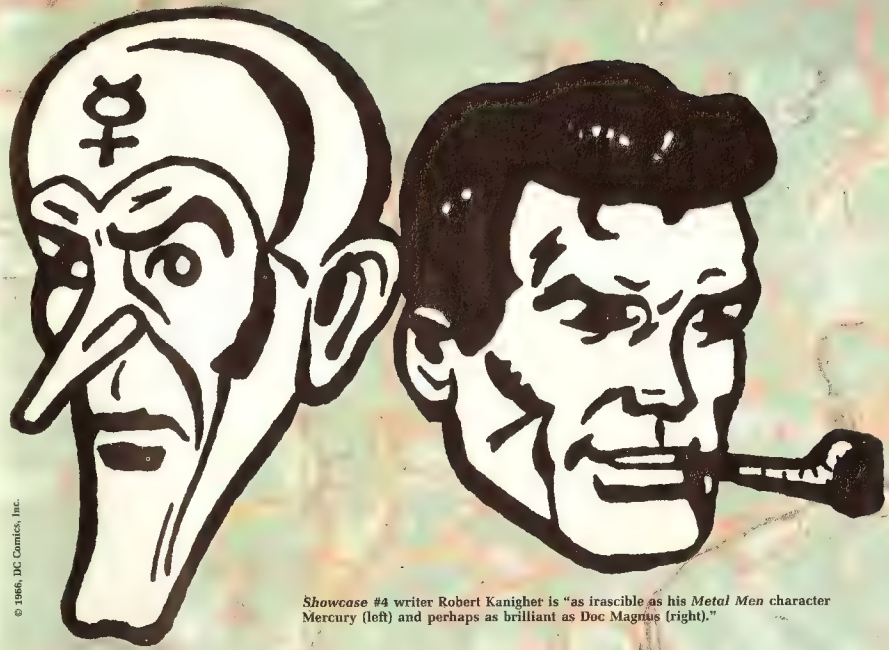
To hear Robert Kanigher tell it, he is owed hundreds of writer and creator credits. "You must understand that I wrote the last three Justice Society stories (of the Golden Age)," Kanigher says. "Gardner Fox had stopped doing them. They're considered to be the best of the entire lot. But they're credited to Gardner Fox.

"And also #4 of the (second series) *Phantom Stranger*. They're blind, because they think Neal Adams did it. Neal Adams only illustrated it. I changed the entire Phantom Stranger. He was originally a guy who showed up in a fedora hat that covered his eyes. He socked the villain on the nose, explained everything that was going to happen, and disappeared. I changed him into a force for good, with cosmic powers, who was opposed by a female power who had cosmic powers of evil at least the equal of his own, if not stronger. I established a love-hate relationship between the two of them, despite the fact that they were two titans fighting over the world.

"I created *Angel and the Ape*, but nobody knows about it except Carmine Infantino. I was going to go to the syndicate with it instead of letting DC have it, and they begged me to write it. And I said I wasn't ready. With a lot of editors around, including (Joe) Orlando, I said, 'Who created *Angel and the Ape*?' They said, 'You did.' So now they're putting out *Angel and the Ape*. And they're putting out *Suicide Squad*. I wrote, created and was the editor of *Suicide Squad*. They're putting out *Ragman*. I created and wrote *Ragman*. For this, I've been getting creator royalties, because the book has been selling above a certain amount. I don't know—100,000. They put out my *El Diablo*. I created and wrote *El Diablo*." Kanigher is also the acknowledged creator of *Sgt. Rock* and *Enemy Ace*.

The writer is asked if Stan Lee was the first to create super-hero characters with interpersonal problems. "That's not true!" Kanigher says. "Long before that, when I first started at DC, I created *Rose and the Thorn*, the first schizoid character. She was a genuine schizoid. As Rose, she was good. As Thorn, she was bad. It was the other side of her."

Kanigher's other firsts? "I sneaked through a homosexual story, through (Murray) Boltinoff." Kanigher says. "I made this character a kamikaze pilot—sensitive, slim, poetic, et cetera—anybody with half a brain would know what I was doing, except him." Kanigher says he also created a sister for the Viking Prince and—if you read



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***Showcase* #4 writer Robert Kanigher is "as irascible as his *Metal Men* character Mercury (left) and perhaps as brilliant as Doc Magnus (right)."**

between the lines—they share a romance. "It's all there," Kanigher says. "It's one other thing which they still haven't caught wise to yet."

Kanigher also says there are subtle sexual themes beneath the surface of stories he wrote for *Wonder Woman*, a title he edited for 22 years. "You must realize that like the army or prison, when you place people of one sex together in close contact, and they're virile and young and strong, there's only one outcome. Without realizing it, DC beat Marvel by 30 years, because the Amazons are homosexual." (Kanigher refers to the revelation that the Marvel super-hero Northstar is gay; Northstar 'came out' in *Alpha Flight* #106).

"And it wasn't the Jay Garrick Flash that was on TV—it was my Flash, the Barry Allen Flash. Why the hell do you think they gave me the money for?" Kanigher—who has never seen an episode of the CBS TV series *The Flash*—says he received a $5,000 check from the show's producers. "I didn't even expect it," Kanigher adds.

Surprisingly, though, Kanigher has no compassion for another Silver Age pioneer who says he was cheated out of creator credits: Jack Kirby. "I was told that I insulted the 'King,' Kirby," Kanigher says. "But I did it very politley, I had never met him before. He was introduced to me (at a comics convention). We were on a panel. And then I was going to be introduced for about an hour, solo. And I said, 'I want you to know in advance'—he was a little, white-haired man—'that I didn't sign the petition that other people signed telling Marvel to return your work.' Neither did Joe Kubert. After all, he got paid for the work that he did, just like everyone else. I'd be a multi-millionaire if I got paid for all the characters I created."

Kanigher—who also paints and writes poetry—recently wrote two complete four-part *Metal Men* stories for DC that were never illustrated. "In one sequence, Tina wanted a new dress so she could attract the inventor," Kanigher says. "So I have Gold pull out two of his back teeth—solid gold—and sell it to buy her a dress. You see, those are what they call Kanigher touches, because they're real. It's possible.

"That, to me, is a human touch. It's what [Frank] Capra calls 'getting to know you.' He will stop a movie, and have a scene where two characters get to know each other.

"I don't plot. I get an emotional idea which fuels the story. Characterization furnishes me with all the action I need. The action is plumbing. It's easy. Nothing to it. It's true action. It's not expected action, when it springs from the characterization. That's real action, not the crappy, gratuitous, grizzly, gory, bloody, robotic, metallic action that's going on now.

"Once, when Schwartz and Fox wrote a *Flash* story maybe 20 years ago, they dedicated it 'to Robert Kanigher, the creator of the Flash.' And then, 10 years later, Schwartz said he and I created the Flash. Now he goes around saying he created Flash. Well, if he's so desperate, why didn't he know how the Flash's costume evolved? I'm the only one who knows, because I took it from that pulp character. In any event, it doesn't matter to me. But I'm credited with having done it and there it is.

"I once wrote a *Flash* in which Barry Allen retires. I had the Flash costume hanging in a museum after he quits. And Barry joins a lot of people in line to view the costume. After he passes it, you see tears running down from the eyeholes.

"You see, I believe that there's no such thing as an inanimate object. Everything has a soul. A tree, a rock...even a piece of metal."

Carmine Infantino

If he made no other contribution to comics—or the whole of popular culture, for that matter—Carmine Infantino can rest on the laurels of having designed the costume for the Flash. That simple, sleek, modern, red-and-yellow costume that has cut a crimson blur across a million comic book pages. A costume so cool, Wally West didn't dare revamp it when he graduated from "Kid Flash" to just plain "Flash." A costume so cool, Hollywood didn't tinker with it either, when they produced a TV version of the Scarlet Speedster (unless you count making the boots red instead of yellow).

Carmine's cool costume.

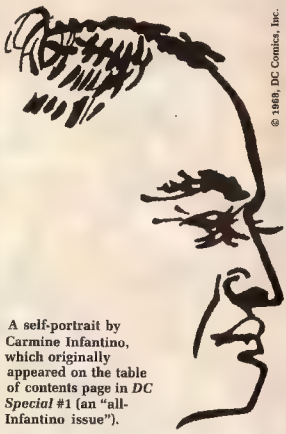
Carmine Infantino was born in 1925 in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, New York and studied at the School of Industrial Arts. He broke into comics in 1942, drawing Jack Frost *for Timely (later Marvel). At Quality, he drew* Lady Luck. *At Hillman, he drew* Airboy *and* The Heap. *Infantino began at National (later DC) in 1946, where he helped ring in the Silver Age of Comics by pencilling the first story to revamp a Golden Age super hero: the Flash.* Showcase *#4—featuring the "whirlwind adventures of the fastest man alive"—hit the stands in October, 1956; Infantino stayed on* The Flash *for 11 years. Starting in 1964, Infantino took over pencilling duties for DC's Batman books (the new art style and chest emblem was christened the "New Look" by editor Julius Schwartz). Infantino became DC's editorial director in 1967, its publisher in 1971, and returned to freelancing in 1976. Recently, the artist returned to the realm of superheroes by pencilling the Batman syndicated newspaper strip (inspired by the success of the 1989 Batman film).*

Infantino reflected on Showcase *#4, the Silver Age, the Golden Age, the "New Look" and his reign as DC's boss in a phone interview from Manhattan:*

CSS: Up to the time of *Showcase* #4, what had been happening in comics?

CARMINE INFANTINO: Comics were in bad shape up until that point. They were still suffering from the horror comics and those senate hearings, and all that nonsense. At DC was, we'd try science fiction, we'd try romance, we'd try westerns...round and round we'd go. Everything but superheroes. And nothing was doing anything. You know, sales would come in a little sloppy, but nothing was really happening.

And apparently—and I was not privvy to this; what I'm telling you now is from what I've been told—there was a staff meeting at DC. And this is what I was told when I went in to get work one day. I thought I was going to be doing another science fiction. Julie [Schwartz] said: "No, you're going to be doing the Flash." I said, "But I did that years ago, that damned thing." You know, I wasn't thrilled about it. And Julie said, "We had a staff meeting, and we figure it's time to try superheroes again. We don't know what's going to come of it, but we'll give it a shot. Because, nothing is doing well. Absolutely nothing." So they gave it to me.



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A self-portrait by Carmine Infantino, which originally appeared on the table of contents page in *DC Special* #1 (an "all-Infantino issue").

And Bob Kanigher wrote it. Now, I know there's some kind of thing between Bob and Julie, who created what. I don't know. I honestly don't know. All I know is I was given a script that Kanigher wrote. I went home and drew it. And I didn't know it was going to be big. I don't think anybody knew. I just thought it was a job and I did it. Period. I pencilled it, and Joey Kubert inked it. The book went out, and we didn't hear much about it. And I think they tried a couple of issues of other things, too. Then when the first report came in, they figured we'd give it another shot, because it was selling pretty good.

So I think it was *Showcase*... I forgot what number we did the Flash again [*Showcase* #8]. Apparently, the numbers held up. So apparently, super heroes were making a comeback at that point. And then it also reflected in *Superman* and *Batman*, because those numbers were moving up, too. So that was the beginning. And then they moved in with Green Lantern and Hawkman and a bunch of other superheroes. Justice League, et cetera, et cetera.

But that's really the history of it. And anybody who claims they knew it would be a big hit is a lot of crap, because it's not true.

CSS: How was the new costume designed?

INFANTINO: I designed that.

CSS: It is so modern-looking. What were you thinking of, or what clues were you getting from Julie or Bob?

INFANTINO: The only clue was in the script, when Bob Kanigher said, well, he's gotta be speedy. And there's this lightning bolt that hits him. So, I figured it'd be best if I put the lightning bolt on his chest. I used that as a symbol around his arms and his waist. I did that for a reason. When he ran, you could streak that out and give an impression of speed. Makes sense, right? I kept his costume very simple, and also I kept him thin and rather small like a runner, if you take notice. I didn't make him a big, powerful guy, because he was a runner. He wasn't supposed to be a powerful guy. I think in subsequent years after I left, they started to make him more muscular and more like a weightlifter, which he wasn't.

CSS: Speaking of that, what did you think of the volatile reader reaction to Ross Andru and Mike Esposito's art after you left? Ross and Mike really got slammed. Were you surprised at that, or didn't you care?

INFANTINO: I think that was normal. Any change, they get upset about. That'll happen with anybody leaving something. It doesn't mean anything. But I think they did a beautiful job on it—a marvelous job on it. I think Ross is one of the better artists around. I defend him 100 percent.

CSS: Were you particularly proud or thrilled when the TV people decided to pretty much stick to your original Flash costume design, rather than radically redesigning it for television, as had been done to the Batman costume for the movie?

INFANTINO: First of all, they didn't ask me. I wasn't consulted at all for any reason whatsoever. So I just kept quiet. Whatever thoughts I had, I kept to myself. But they did make some small changes, didn't they?

CSS: They added muscles, and made his boots red.

INFANTINO: And also, they used a lot of darkness. They treated it like *Batman*, the movie. To me, that was a mistake. I think that's why it failed, frankly. But again, nobody asked me, so I didn't offer any advice.

I also designed all of the costumes for all of the Flash villains, too. And Kid Flash. All the villains there. Even on Batman, there were a couple I designed. There was a girl named Poison Ivy. I created her—I redesigned her, anyway. She may have been around.

CSS: I was going to ask you about when Julie Schwartz had you draw Batman...

INFANTINO: That was a decision by Irwin Donnenfeld, by the way, who was then the publisher. Apparently, the Batman was dying. They were getting sales like 18, 17 percent. It was literally dying off. So he suggested to Julie—this is what I was told, now—that they should put me on *Detective Comics*, and I should do all the covers on *Batman*, and see if anything happens. If nothing happened, they were going to unload the strip. Drop it altogether. That's how bad it was. The first issue I did (*Detective* #327), did well. And then the covers helped on the other Batman stuff.

CSS: Did you design the yellow bat chest emblem, which is the most obvious change in the "New Look"?

INFANTINO: I have to be honest with you. Julie Schwartz suggested it.

CSS: Was he pushing for more costume changes, or were you just going to do that one little thing?

INFANTINO: At the moment, we were just going to do subtle changes. We were feeling our way. The only thing they did want me to do was keep the character in my style. Because they thought (Bob) Kane had gotten too cartoony or something. Kane was not happy. He was very unhappy. He said my work stunk and he was just not happy. But I can understand that, too. You know, he was being taken off the strip. It makes sense. That's a normal reaction. There's nothing detrimental about that. And then I stayed with it until I became the editor there.

CSS: You were editor at DC during a very experimental era in the company's history—the late '60s and early '70s. Everything was kind of turning "groovy." Like, Wonder Woman wore white leather jumpsuits and opened a boutique ...

INFANTINO: I wrote some of those.

CSS: ...and Lois Lane dumped Superman and wore psychedelic dresses, and "flower people" were creeping into storylines. Was there a conscious push for DC to get more, like, "with it?"

INFANTINO: Yes, yes.

CSS: Was it because the books were in trouble?

INFANTINO: You make changes if a book is in trouble.

CSS: Was there any research involved? Did you ever try to talk to any, like, real hippies? You know...to capture the look and lingo?

INFANTINO: We hired a woman editor at that time, if I'm not mistaken. I can't remember her name. She was into all that stuff, you know?

CSS: For instance, Mike Sekowsky seemed to have a real feel for it.

INFANTINO: Yes. Yes. Mike was mostly on *Wonder Woman*. I used to plot them, and Denny O'Neill would do the dialogue on 'em. Denny and I would sit, with Mike, and I'd plot them out. And then Mike would draw it and Denny would put the dialogue to it. It worked very nicely. There were a couple we did together. I

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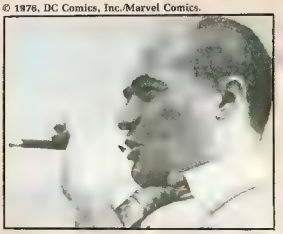

The penciller of *Showcase* #4, Carmine Infantino, with stogie.

didn't do them all. Do you remember when she comes back and becomes human, Wonder Woman? That's the period. That, and about three or four issues where they have submarines and woman clones. I did those and then I couldn't do it any more. The editorial was getting too heavy. So I dropped it and Mike took it over. That was a big mistake. His writing was not good. I should have given it to Denny, but I gave it to Mike. That was my problem.

CSS: The books sold, didn't they?

INFANTINO: They were starting to fade. Mike got too heavy with it.

CSS: Around that time, Mike also did *Jason's Quest* ...

INFANTINO: I plotted that one. That was my character.

CSS: ...and *Manhunter 2000* in *Showcase*. DC was trying to be a lot more topical during this period.

INFANTINO: And then I was involved in the developing of *Batlash*. I plotted all of those. By the way—to me, Nick Cardy is the best artist that ever was or ever will be. He was the best. He was, and he still is, I think. Genius. Sheer genius.

CSS: Was it your decision to enlist the services of Jack Kirby?

INFANTINO: Yes. I knew Jack.

CSS: And you knew things weren't great at Marvel for him?

INFANTINO: I knew he was unhappy, so I went out to California and met with him. I spoke to him before I went out there. We talked a while. He said he was very unhappy, et cetera, et cetera, and he'd like to make a change. I said, "Well, if you have anything, come over." And he had those three books. The three he created...

CSS: *New Gods*, *Forever People* and *Mister Miracle*.

INFANTINO: Right.

CSS: In those books, where it says "Edited, written and penciled by Jack Kirby," one gets the impression that Jack demanded autonomy.

INFANTINO: Yes. He came over with the stipulation that he would control everything. He wasn't getting that kind of autonomy over at Marvel and he was upset. Would I give it to him? I said, "Okay, we'll try it on these books and see what happens."

By the way, I don't care what he says. Those books did not sell. I know he went around saying later that they were selling and I killed them off anyway. Which is a little stupid, isn't it? Because, my neck was on the line for hiring the guy. So why would I kill off books that were doing well?

CSS: Are you surprised that a lot of those characters were revived and are around now?

INFANTINO: Not really, no. Everything goes in cycles, you know? Things keep coming back. I created *The Demon*, not Jack. I handed it to him, because as I was killing off his other books, I kept handing him characters to do. I gave him *The Demon*. I created *Kamandi* and I plotted that for him. Of course, he took credit for those. I don't care. I didn't give a damn. As editor, it was my job to create things. But he never really fulfilled what he felt he had. He felt he could write. His writing never took off.

CSS: But the artwork was as good as ever. The characters and the costumes, everything was great.

INFANTINO: Marvelous.

CSS: And being on his own as he was, Kirby's DC stuff also made one appreciate that he probably contributed more, editorially, to the Stan Lee/Jack Kirby collaborations than one originally thought.

INFANTINO: That I know nothing about. I do know that later on when I put Jack with Joe Simon on *The Sandman*, the goddamn book went through the roof. The sales! But he refused to work with Joe after that. He only did the one, and then right after that he got very testy and decided to leave me and go back to Marvel. Well, he wasn't very successful for me, so I wasn't that upset.

CSS: At the time *Sandman* #1 came out in 1974, DC's readers had been primed for the Simon-Kirby reunion because the folks had been reprinting a lot of their Golden Age material in the back of the Kirby line.

INFANTINO: And also, Joe was a terrific writer. So the combination worked well together. But Jack refused to work with him any more. At first I had to plead with him. "Work with Joe!" It didn't make sense, because they were so successful at the beginning. So he said, "I'll do that issue." I said, "Work on *The Sandman*, we'll see what happens." His other books were dead. *Forever People, New Gods*. They just died. So he said, "Okay. I'll do that one with Joe." So Joe wrote it, and Joe even laid it out, if I'm not mistaken. And it did sensational. In those days, a 65 percent sale is fantastic when the average is 51, 52. So the book went right through the roof. And I called him and said, "Jack, we've got the combination now! You and Joe!" And he said, "Absolutely not! No way, ever!" So we let the contract run out and that was the end. He left.

CSS: What about Joe's infamous *Brother Power, the Geek*?

INFANTINO: That did well. But a guy named Mort Weisinger at the time had a lot of influence at DC. I didn't have full editorship at the time. And he went in to [Jack] Liebowitz, who ran the company, and said he thought the character was disgusting, and he didn't want it. He created waves. They killed *The Geek*, but *The Geek* was starting to sell. I thought it was good writing. I loved it.

CSS: And Simon's other books, like the *Green Team* in *First Issue Special*, and *Prez*.

INFANTINO: I think the reason those books didn't make it was the artwork. Grenedetti's artwork was a little too severe for that thing. The times dictated a more realistic approach. But the writing was terrific on those things. So I was stunned when they didn't make it.

CSS: Let me ask you about the Steve Ditko books. They were wonderful. Legend has it that they were short-lived because Ditko got ill.

INFANTINO: I liked those books. *The Hawk and the Dove*. I loved that concept. Steve was a fine writer. That and *The Creeper*. I thought they were good. *The Creeper* didn't do well on the stands. And, in fact, *The Hawk and the Dove* started to fade too. Steve, I think, got ill at the time. He couldn't go on, or he didn't want to go on. He didn't want to bother with it anymore.

CSS: *The Creeper* is a revered character, even if the newsstand wasn't good at the time. And, of course, *The Hawk and the Dove* are back. A great concept. Very topical.

INFANTINO: It was very interesting. You know what was wrong with that? The title. The Vietnam War was on. People connected that with the war, and that hurt that book.

CSS: But wasn't that what was in favor of it? Didn't that title make the book topical?

INFANTINO: That's what I thought. That's why I wanted that title. That's why I made the title up. But I guess I did wrong. I don't know. Whatever.

CSS: You and Stan Lee co-presented the giant format *Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man* book, the first-ever DC/Marvel crossover book, in 1976. Was there a lot of tedious negotiation on that? Did you guys have to go back and forth counting panels?

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WHILE THE TWO FLASHES FIGHT IT OUT FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF CAPTURING ME I... MAKE MY GETAWAY
A new DOUBLE FLASH thriller
"VENGEANCE OF THE IMMORTAL VILLAIN!"

The Golden Age Flash (Jay Garrick) meets the Silver Age Flash (Barry Allen) on the Infantino cover of *Flash* #137.

INFANTINO: No. What happened was, it wasn't even Stan's and my decision to go ahead with that thing. I was not for it, frankly. Because Marvel was not that big at the time, and I didn't want to give them any credence. But the order came from upstairs that we had to do the book, so I went ahead and did it. We sat down with Stan's people and we talked about it. We put the writers on it. The script was written and then it was reviewed by both companies—you know, the editorial staff—to make sure that nobody was getting favoritism. We all agreed. It went very smoothly. It didn't have the problems people thought it would. It went quickly and smoothly.

CSS: It was a stroke of brilliance to select Ross Andru as penciller. He was a great Spider-Man artist for Marvel and a great Superman artist for DC.

INFANTINO: He was a natural. I asked for him. He worked for Marvel at the time. He was good.

CSS: You recently got back into pencilling with the Batman newspaper strip.

INFANTINO: I wasn't happy about the inking. And also, I complained that there's no Batman in this strip. Do you remember? There wasn't too much of Batman going on!

CSS: Now that you mention it, there was a lot of Bruce Wayne...

INFANTINO: Everybody else but Batman! My God, where's the Batman? But this is what they wanted up there. So you do what they want.

CSS: Was it hard keeping up with that schedule?

INFANTINO: Naah. I was way ahead. Three days a week to do those.

CSS: Did you enjoy it?

INFANTINO: Yeah. I did. I used to enjoy those scenes in the mansion. And the villains. I enjoyed it, yes.

CSS: Some day they'll put out a compilation of those. Maybe 20 years from now.

INFANTINO: I won't be around (laughs). I guess—they usually do. Or if the second Batman movie gets hot, they might put them all out again soon, or start the strip up again.

CSS: Do you remember the first Flash story you ever drew, back in the Golden Age?

INFANTINO: Oh, God, I don't remember that one. That was very early, when I first began at DC in the '40s. I started on *Johnny Quick*, and then the *Ghost Patrol*, and from there I went to the original Flash.

CSS: Were you "the" Flash artist for a while during the Golden Age?

INFANTINO: No, I wasn't the only one. A fella named Lee Elias was doing it. He was wonderful.

CSS: Carmine, you must know how much it costs to get ahold of these books today. I was wondering...

INFANTINO: I don't have a one. I swear to you, I don't have one copy of any of those books.

CSS: Nothing even from the '60s?

INFANTINO: Nothing. Nothing.

CSS: That's sad to hear.

INFANTINO: I wasn't too bright. I didn't save anything. Even the artwork, we never saved. They used to throw it away on us. Some people were smart, and they used to go to the waste basket and pick 'em out and take 'em home. They only began saving them much later. I'm sorry—I would have a lot of money today if I did.

CSS: If you do, occasionally, get to see the old stories you drew, do you remember them?

INFANTINO: Oh, yeah. When I look at them, I know where I was at the time. That, I do remember. But the only thing I can tell you is, I never felt we were in on this great cultural thing coming, you know? We never felt that way about it. At least, I never did. It got big, but I didn't expect it. I think most things that are successful are usually that way.

DAWN OF THE SILVER AGE

Stan Lee

Nineteen-thirty-nine was a very good year for comics. In 1939. Batman swooped into our lives in Detective *#27. Superman became the first superhero to have a title named for him in* Superman *#1,* Marvel Comics *#1 introduced the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner, and 16-year-old Stan Lee got his first job in comics—a job that, in one form or another, he really hasn't let go of for more than half a century.*

Born Stanley Lieber in New York City in 1922, Stan Lee's early tenure at Timely (later Marvel) Comics was interrupted for three years during World War II, when he served in the Signal Corps. In 1942, Lee was promoted to editor at Timely, after his old bosses Joe Simon and Jack Kirby defected to National (later DC) Comics. During the Golden Age of Comics, Lee wrote scripts for Captain America, Young Allies, Jack Frost, Black Marvel *and innumerable others. But it wasn't until 1961 that the pivotal moment in Stan Lee's career came to pass.*

The state of comics in 1961? "It was going nowhere, it seemed," Lee—now 70—remembers. "We were poking around. We were doing a lot of monster magazines at the time. Some western stuff, too. I felt that things were going nowhere. For years, I had wanted to quit. And my publisher, Martin Goodman, told me he'd like me to do a superhero group. He heard that DC's book the Justice League *was selling. And I figured, okay, but I was going to try to make them a little different. I was really bored with the way things were going, so I decided to do a group of superheroes, but maybe give them an edge, different than they had been before. And I never expected that it would turn into anything sensational. I was just trying to keep from being bored to death.*

"I was just about ready to quit at the time we did Fantastic Four *#1. I figured I'll do this one book and then leave. But when I found out that our sales were that good—you know, when we got our sales figures about three months later—I couldn't believe the figures. So I thought, well, maybe I'll stay a little bit longer."*

And stay he did, though somewhat more than just "a little bit" longer. After striking newsstand gold with the adventures of Reed, Sue, Johnny and Ben, Lee and his artists—chiefly Kirby and Steve Ditko—set about creating the Marvel Universe: the Hulk, Spider-Man, Dr. Strange, Iron Man, Daredevil, Thor, X-Men and many others. Lee became Marvel's publisher in 1972, and moved to Los Angeles in 1981, where he now keeps an office as chairman of Marvel Entertainment. Lee still writes "Stan's Soapbox" and the Spider-Man syndicated newspaper strip (which he began in 1977). He narrated a videocassette version of his book, How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way. *And Lee is working with James Cameron (Aliens) on an upcoming big screen version of Spider-Man, with a hoped-for release date in 1995.*

Thirty-one years after the big splash he and Jack Kirby made with Fantastic Four *#1, Stan "the Man" Lee spoke about his long career in comics with grace and wit. Lee was funny, thoughtful, clearly "on" and surprisingly generous with his time, considering his legendary I'm-a-very-busy-man demeanor. Lee spoke in a phone interview from his Los Angeles office:*

CSS: We're going to try to ask you some questions you haven't been asked yet.

STAN LEE: There are no questions I haven't been asked yet (laughs). They don't exist.

CSS: When you first started at Timely in '39, what would a typical work day be like? What kind of duties did young Stan Lee have?

LEE: Gosh—I'd erase pages. I would proofread some pages that had been already lettered. I'd write some captions or correct some copy here and there if they needed it. And I ran errands (laughs). Got coffee.

CSS: There you go. Do you have any copies of *Fantastic Four* #1 left, personally?

LEE: Believe it or not, I don't know. I have a few closets at home, cabinets and cupboards in which I've got stuff just piled in there. And I've never had the time to go through them and take an inventory. There may be a copy or two, but I honestly don't know. One of these days I've got to go through and itemize everything.

CSS: With *Fantastic Four* #1, you revamped the Human Torch as a totally new character, rather than revive the original Torch. On this subject of reviving a superhero versus revamping a superhero, was your decision to "unfreeze" the original Captain America in *Avengers* #4 a tongue-in-cheek way of handling that issue?

LEE: It seems to me I had heard or read somewhere—I have no memory at all—that we last saw Captain America frozen in a glacier. So it just seemed to me that that's a great way to bring him back. We'll have him discovered in the glacier.

CSS: Was it Steve Ditko's cartooniness and innocent style that made Spider-Man's debut in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 such a hit, do you think?

LEE: Oh, I think Ditko was tremendously responsible for the popularity. As you may know, Kirby did a few pages. When I saw them, I said, "No, no, this isn't what I want." I took him off the book and gave it to Ditko. I felt Spider-Man should not look like the typical superhero. And Ditko's style at the time was just perfect.

CSS: When John Romita started drawing Spider-Man, all of a sudden it looked a lot less cartoony and a lot more serious. Did you play to that in your writing?

LEE: Everything I wrote, I would play to the way the artist drew it. In the style we use, the artist draws it first, and then you put the copy in. You have to write that way, because if you're going to write it the way you want—regardless of how the artist draws it—you're going to come up with a very weak story. John didn't

change the style immediately. The first issue or two, he aped Ditko's style very well. He really did a great version of Ditko. But little by little, he got into his own style, which I thought was best for the book. You can't ask somebody to draw in a style that's not his own and expect to get his best work. At some point, we had to let John just do it in his style, and it turned out to be a good decision.

CSS: Do you have any vague notion of how many characters you've created?

LEE: (Laughs) No, I really have no idea. And I even created so many characters before Marvel over the years, when we were just doing these ordinary magazines. I created western characters, romance characters, humor characters. In humor, there were *Nellie the Nurse* and *Millie the Model* and *My Friend Irma*. Hundreds of them. Well, I didn't create *My Friend Irma*—that was based on a TV show. And there was *Georgie* and *Willie* and *Freddy*. It goes on forever. Then in the war stuff, there was *Combat Casey*, *Combat Kelly*. And with westerns there was the *Black Rider*, the *Two-Gun Kid*, the *Rawhide Kid* and on and on. The animated cartoons, there's no way to keep count. There was *Silly Seal* and *Ziggy Pig* and *Posty the Pellican*. It just goes on.

CSS: Looking at all of the early '60s Marvel titles that you wrote simultaneously, how did you juggle all of those plots and sub-plots without having a nervous breakdown? Reading an issue of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, one finds so many tightly interwoven sub-plots. You have minor characters in the office looking at each other sideways and saying one line, and the thread doesn't get picked up until the next issue. Specifically, how did you do it? Did you plot one title a year's worth ahead of time? Or did you write them month-to-month, spontaneously?

LEE: I was never smart enough to do it a year at a time. In fact, I marvel—I used that word advisedly (laughs)—but I marvel at the way our writers and editors today are able to construct stories that extend for a year and know how everything is going to fit. They have themes that overlap from book to book and so forth. No, I wrote each book one at a time. We were so busy then and had such a small staff. I would write a *Fantastic Four*, and then somebody would say to me, "Stan! We need a *Thor* story now! It's due!" I'd say, "Okay!" and I'd come up with a plot for Thor and give it to the artist and he'd draw it. While he was drawing it, somebody would say, "We need a *Daredevil*!" So I'd do a *Daredevil* plot and give that to the artist. I kept giving plots to people.

As time went on, the plots that I gave became skimpier and skimpier. The artists were good themselves at plotting. I didn't have the time, and they did it well. After a while, I thought the books would maintain their interest even better if it wasn't all my imput. So I liked the idea of the artist coming up with as many themes and thoughts as he could.

Then when the artwork came back to me to put in the copy, I was just guided by what was in the drawing. As I said to you, I always wrote every story according to the way it was drawn. Very often—and I think it was one of the things that made the stories work well—I would look at a drawing and get a totally different idea than what the artist originally had in mind. Obviously, I couldn't change an action. If a guy was running, I couldn't write it as if he was sitting in a chair. But the artist might have him running as though he's chasing somebody, but I may have written it as if he were running for a different reason. Do you know what I mean? I would alter it, and that's what made it fun for me. I would alter the story as I was writing it.

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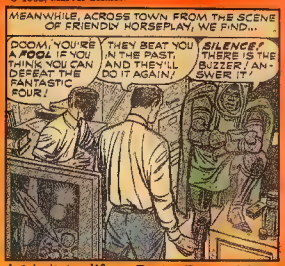
MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN FROM THE SCENE OF FRIENDLY HORSEPLAY, WE FIND...
DOOM! YOU'RE A FOOL IF YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
THEY BEAT YOU IN THE PAST, AND THEY'LL DO IT AGAIN!
SILENCE! THERE IS THE BUZZER. ANSWER IT!

Art imitates life as Doctor Doom visits the Marvel Office! In a panel from *Fantastic Four* #10, written by Stan Lee and drawn by Jack Kirby, Doctor Doom is shown using the real-life writer and artist to enact a plan of revenge against the Fantastic Four!

Mostly, those little things that happened in one issue and cropped up in another issue, I would say happened as often because the artist remembered something from the last issue as I did. But, each time I had to write the copy—because I have such a bad memory—I would quickly go through my carbon and look at my script for the previous book. And I would read the script quickly, and that refreshed my memory. And in reading the script, I would say, "Gee, Flash said something," or "Harry Osbourne said something here. It would be great if I could comment on it in the next issue." And then I would look through the artwork and see if there was a place I could comment on it. But if I hadn't sat down to read the carbon of the last script, I never would have remembered it.

I never planned more than one issue ahead. I don't have that kind of mind. In fact, it's more fun for me if I don't know what's going to happen. That's the reason, really. I could have planned ahead, of course. But then I'd be bored. Like when I do the Spider-Man newspaper strip, I have to do that many weeks and months ahead. And I find that it bores me a little bit, because I know what's happening. When I was doing the comic books, I was never sure what was going to happen, and that kept my interest up.

CSS: Do you have any philosophies on continuity? It's important to the reader that he can believe he's reading about the same character from issue to issue. But then when 20 or 30 years go by, is it the same character any more? Were you opposed to—or did you have any thoughts at all on—when DC did *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, killing off old characters or revamping their origins? When you see how characters you created 30 years ago are behaving today, do you feel they're the same people?

LEE: Well, a lot of the characters have been changed quite a bit since they first appeared in the early '60s. Iron Man—his costume had changed. He became an alcoholic for a while, then he was cured. Characters have died. The girl I had as his girlfriend is probably no longer in the strip. And on and on. Whether or not I would have done that myself, if I were writing the book myself, I don't know. There's a good chance I would have, because you can't keep things the same forever. The readers have to get bored, or you yourself have to get bored with the storyline. For example, at one point I decided we have to marry Spider-Man off. You know, he was going with this girl for too long. And we did that. Sometimes you feel you want to kill a character off.

I never really read that *Crisis on Earth* or whatever it was that DC did, but from the way you say it, if they just simply said, "From now on, we're changing the backgrounds of the characters" or something, that's not the way I would do it. I would let it happen as part of the story. Do you know what I mean? As part of the continuing evolution in characters' lives. I don't think I would simply say, "Okay, gang, from this point on, we're changing the rules." If, indeed, that's what they did. I don't know, because I didn't read it.

CSS: Marvel comic books were the first to break away from the Mort Weisinger-style, gee whiz, kid-growing-up-in-an-idylic-town kind of wholesome superhero story. But nowadays, the "dark" style is so prevalent in comics, with it's realism,

violence and blood. Do you feel that comic books today go too far with the violence? Is there anything in comic books today that you object to?

LEE: I don't know. I think they are a little more violent, or a little bit darker, than when I was doing them. Perhaps, all of literature and motion pictures and television have gotten the same way. Maybe we're just going along with the times, the trend. To me, the most important thing in any comic is: Is it a good story? Is it well-drawn? Is it believable? I know that sounds silly when you're talking about fantasy, but even fantasy can be written so that it's believable, once you accept the rules of where they are and what their powers are. Everything else should be believable. And is the characterization good? Is it well done? Some people like more violence, some people like less. Some people like stories darker, some people don't. I've never tried to impose my taste totally on the readers. I always tried to do stories that were different types. I never liked violence for the sake of violence. I'm not sure they do today.

The violence—we preferred to call it "action"—the action had to come out of the story. There had to be a reason for it. And you can have all the action in the world. If you're not interested in the characters, it won't mean a thing. So, I've always felt that Marvel was primarily a character-driven company. The most important thing is to have characters that the readers care about. If you do, you can have a story with no action at all and still keep the story interesting and exciting. Or when you have the action, it means something to the reader, because the reader is involved.

CSS: We used to love reading your slams against "Brand Ecch," your thinly-veiled nickname for DC. You always made particular fun of DC's so-called "imaginary stories." You'd always make the point that Marvel stories weren't dream sequences or "imaginary stories." Did DC's "imaginary stories" turn you off? Did you read the competition that closely?

LEE: Well, occasionally I'd read a story if it looked interesting to me. I tried to look at the competitive books all the time. You've gotta be crazy to be in a business and not try to learn what you're competitors are doing. I didn't have time to read all the books. In fact, I very rarely had time to read all of our books. But I tried to be aware of what they were doing.

No, it's not that their stories turned me off. A lot of them were real good. It's just that my preference was for stories that we claimed were really happening. I felt that dreams and "imaginary stories," in a sense, were cheating the reader. I wouldn't have wanted to read a Sherlock Holmes story that was a dream, or a Tarzan that was "imaginary." If I read one of those, I wanted to feel this is really happening. Then I'd be interested and I'd be concerned. I don't know how you can be concerned about a character if it's just an imaginary story.

CSS: A lot of Marvel readers share your disappointments at how some of the attempts to translate the Marvel style out of comic books into other mediums—like movies and television—have turned out. But believe it or not, I think one of the most successful crossovers was the animated cartoon TV show of 1966.

LEE: (Sings) He's a hulky, kind of bulky, kind of sulky super hero ...

© 1966, Marvel Comics.
MARVEL SUPER-HEROES ARE COMING YOUR WAY ON TV!
CAPTAIN AMERICA THE SUB-MARINER
IRON MAN THE MIGHTY THOR
THE INCREDIBLE HULK

An ad for the *Marvel Super Heroes* animated cartoon series. Stan Lee says this was the most successful translation of the Marvel style to another medium.

CSS: People say those things are poorly animated, but when you watch them, you find that these cartoons are literally animated comic books. They are actual artwork from comic books—recognizable Jack Kirby, Don Heck—being animated. My question is, this being one of the very first other-media ventures for Marvel, did you give this a lot of personal attention? And how was it arranged that the animators got the artwork?

LEE: I don't remember too clearly. The two guys who did it, I believe, were Bob Lawrence and Steve Krantz. They were interested in preserving the real feeling the Marvel characters had, and I worked with them. While the animation was rather limited, they made a concerted effort to keep them as close to the stories in the Marvel comic books and as close to the artwork as possible. Unfortunately, all of the other animation we did—or most of it—was all done for networks. And networks are notorious for changing things and editing things. Telling you how they want to do it.

You're right. Of everything that's been done, those primitive cartoons were the closest to our own style.

CSS: A lot of artists from the Silver Age and the Golden Age sometimes say they're bitter, that they've been taken advantage of. But one gets the impression that you've always stayed on top of things, that you didn't have all of your eggs in the creative basket. That you also had business sense.

LEE: No. Actually, I must say, I think that all of my eggs were in the creative basket. I had as little to do with the business end of the company as possible. The only business dealings I had was I would tell our publisher at the time which books I thought would sell and which wouldn't. But not as far as what people come to mean by business—the amount of books we distribute, or what price or the cost or anything like that.

The only business thing I always tried to be involved in was trying to get the artists, writers, editors and whoever was on staff, trying to increase their pay. I always felt that people were tremendously underpaid in comics. When you would compare what a writer of a comic book would get to what a writer who sold a novel or a screenplay or a television show was getting, or what an artist would get for doing an advertising drawing or a painting, I always felt that the rates were embarrassingly low. But the people at the business end of our company would tell me we were paying as much as we could, and if we paid any more we'd go out of business, or we couldn't afford to do the books. So it was always a constant battle between me and them. It was a friendly battle, but a battle that never ended.

CSS: How about the subject of credits? When one reads the early '60s DC books, it's very frustrating because they really list no credits other than the editor's name in small print at the bottom of the opening page. A skilled eye can identify a penciller easily enough, but not usually writers or inkers. Marvel books were very helpful in listing pencillers, inkers, etc. In fact, you had the running gag where you denigrated the inker. In an old *Spider-Man*, you wrote: "Written by Stan Lee, author of the *Fantastic Four*; Drawn by Steve Ditko, illustrator of *Dr. Strange*; Inked by Sammy Rosen, letterer of...*Millie the Model*?" The humor was great, and the information was helpful. Since DC wasn't doing it, was this something you decided on? Was it something new, or had you been doing it all along?

LEE: I had been doing it since we started. Well, I didn't do it with the first few issues of *Fantastic Four*, but little by little—as I saw that our books were getting popular—I got more confidence in myself, and I started doing

Photo by Jim McLernon.

The editor and writer of *Fantastic Four* #1, Stan Lee, as he appears today.

the things that I always wanted to do. Things that I felt I would've liked if I had seen them in other books. And the one thing I wanted to do with our books was give them a friendly, informal feeling. I think the most important thing I tried to do was make our readers feel they weren't just readers, or they weren't just fans, but they were friends of ours. And that we were friends of theirs. And that we were somehow sharing a little, inside secret that the rest of the world wasn't privvy to. All of these little things, like the humorous credits and so forth, it's because I like to kid around a lot. It's always hard for me to be serious too long. It made it more interesting for me to write the credits, because I was always trying to think of a new way to say the names. So I enjoyed doing it, just like I enjoyed writing the "Soapbox" column. I enjoyed writing the little editor's notes in the panels. Sometimes in a caption, I'd put an asterisk at the end of a caption, and I'd put a little note on the bottom, and sign it "Stan." Some stupid thing, like if there was a sound effect—"B-T-O-O-O-M-K"—I'd put an asterisk and on the bottom I'd write: "Obviously, the third 'O' is silent" (laughs).

CSS: Is it possible for you to pick one, favorite superhero from the throng?

LEE: Believe it or not, I don't have favorites. When I was writing them, my favorite was whoever I was writing at the moment. I guess I would have to say Spider-Man, only because he's become the symbol of our company the way Mickey Mouse is to Walt Disney. I also have a warm spot in my heart for the Silver Surfer, because I loved the little bits of philosophy I used to have him expound. If I think about it, I was crazy about Thor. I loved the corny way he would talk. I loved having his father say "So be it!" and all of those expressions. I loved Dr. Strange with his incantations, and the crazy names I would make up for the villains, like Dormammu and so forth. I like Daredevil, because it was fun doing a blind man who was able to do anything better than anyone else. I liked Sub-Mariner—although I didn't create him—because he was not that friendly with the human race. He was almost a hero-villain. I liked all of them. I liked the Hulk, the idea of a hero being a monster. I can go on and on. I liked them all. I'm very fond of my little creations.

CSS: Is it easier to select a favorite among the villains?

LEE: Yes—Dr. Doom.

CSS: Last question. How about a favorite heroine?

LEE: There's one funny thing about Mary Jane...I always thought that Gwen, in *Spider-Man*, would be the one that Peter Parker would marry. John Romita and I used to laugh about it, because after we created Mary Jane, her personality was so strong that she sort of took over. Gwen always seemed so dull next to Mary Jane. And we'd say, "These are imaginary characters! We made them up! Why can't we make Gwen as interesting as Mary Jane?" For the life of us, we couldn't do it!

Jack Kirby

He is called "the King." No–not Elvis. But someone who is as influential and revered in comic book circles as Elvis was in the realm of rock 'n' roll. Jack "King" Kirby created (with Joe Simon) the ultimate patriot in Captain America, his World War II-era superhero. And, with Stan Lee, Kirby helped usher in the "Marvel Age." For Marvel, Kirby designed the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, the Hulk, Thor, the Silver Surfer, the X-Men and many others. But Kirby is as beloved for his storytelling as he is for his designs. His action sequences are still considered the gospel of comic book art to this day.

(CS SPECTACULAR recently tracked Kirby down at a comic convention. Part of this interview was conducted one-on-one; the remainder of Kirby's comments are from a Q-and-A held the same day.)

"I came from a very poor section of town, but loved comics and wanted to find out where they came from," the New York City-born comics legend, 75, says in a grandfatherly voice. Kirby had to satisfy his voracious reading habit in secret because, he says, "Tough guys didn't read science fiction."

Kirby's early artistic influences were comic strips like *Maggie and Jigs*, *Barney Google*, and artists like Norman Rockwell and Milton Caniff (*Terry and the Pirates*, *Steve Canyon*). "Caniff was the one who galvanized the industry," Kirby says. "He dared to combine illustration with the comics."

In 1935, Kirby found work as an animator for Max Fleisher, drawing *Betty Boop* and *Popeye*. Through the late '30s, Kirby drew for the Lincoln Newspaper Syndicate, where an editor once balked at a cartoon he drew of Adolph Hitler. Remembers Kirby: "He said, 'What does a little squirt like you know about politics?' I told him I come from a place where a gangster is a gangster, and I make no bones about it. Hitler was grabbing up everything in sight."

In 1941, Kirby and fellow artist Joe Simon teamed up to create Captain America for Timely (later Marvel) Comics. The world was at war, and Captain America–a super patriot clad in stars and stripes who battled Nazis with his trademark shield–was an instant hit. "Captain America's costume is the American flag," Kirby says. "And the American flag, to my mind, is perpetual. At the time it was created–those times were patriotic. They were before the war was coming on. The times supplied me with my hero

and my villain. You couldn't get a better villain than Hitler."

Throughout the '40s, the Kirby-Simon team bounced around various comic companies (Kirby also did a hitch in the Army), including Harvey, Crestwood, National (later DC) and Hillman. Kirby and Simon created such titles as *The Boy Commandos*, *The Newsboy Legion* and *Boys' Ranch*.

At Hillman, the pair produced the first romance comic. "We discovered girls," Kirby says. "And we loved pulp magazines. And suddenly, one day, there was a love pulp magazine on the newsstand. So we said, 'Let's try that.' We put out *Young Romance*."

Kirby and Simon formed Mainline Comics in 1954, and the pair split up in 1956. By then, the popularity of super characters in comics had all but died off. Kirby joined Marvel in 1959, drawing monster comics. "It was the names of the monsters that struck me funny," he says. "It would be names like 'Bazoo.' It was that kind of time–the 1950s, when the adventure stories weren't selling. But horror always sells."

However, a change was in the winds. In 1956, DC struck newsstand gold with *Showcase* #4, in which the Golden Age Flash was revamped. More revamped heroes followed, such as Green Lantern, Hawkman, Atom and the Justice League of America (known as the Justice Society during the Golden Age). In 1961, Marvel-publisher Martin Goodman ordered Stan Lee to come up with a superhero team to try to compete with the Justice League at the newsstand. Lee and Kirby revamped one of Marvel's Golden Age heroes–the Human Torch–and built a team around him they called the Fantastic Four. The difference was that Lee and Kirby played up characterization and human (or, one might say, "inhuman") conflict. *Fantastic Four* #1 was an immediate success, and rang in what we now know as the Marvel Age of Comics.

And so Lee–with artists like Kirby and Steve Ditko–set about creating a new universe, the "Marvel Universe." Kirby designed the Silver Surfer ("I saw surfers on the beach in California, and I'd never seen anything like it"), the Hulk ("He's the ruthlessness inside all of us"), Thor, the God of Thunder ("Thor is an ancient myth–what I did was to make him saleable once again") and the Thing, who some say is based on the artist.

"That's what they used to tell me," Kirby laughs. "As I grew older, I tended to think that they were right. If you read Ben's dialogue, that's me talking."

The Boy COMMANDOS
ORDER OF THE DAY
EMERGENCY! TAKING OFF IMMEDIATELY TO HELP LIFT THE SIEGE OF KROVKA...THE NAZI RING OF STEEL MUST BE BROKEN... AND WE'RE THE GUYS TO DO IT!
Rip Carter
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THUNDER AND FLAME SWEEP THE STEPPES OF RUSSIA...WHERE IVAN VANIN AND HIS VALIANT FAMILY FACE THE MURDEROUS HORDES THAT POUR ACROSS HIS NATIVE LAND TO PILLAGE AND PLUNDER.....
RIP CARTER AND HIS BOY COMMANDOS ARE THERE TOO... FIGHTING SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE CENTURY'S MOST COURAGEOUS PEOPLE! HERE IS A SAGA... STRAIGHT FROM YOUR DAILY WAR COMMUNIQUE... A STUDY OF A REAL FIGHTING FAMILY...BLOODY... BUT UNBOWED!
by JOE SIMON and JACK KIRBY
U.S.S.R.
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An early Joe Simon/Jack Kirby collaboration was *Boy Commandos*, which appeared in *Detective* #69.

Indeed, the decade of the '60s was Kirby's most prolific period. "If I busted my gut," he says, "I did five pages a day."

During Marvel's first decade, Kirby kicked off *The Hulk*, *The Avengers* and *X-Men* (which were later inherited by Steve Ditko, Don Heck and Werner Roth, respectively), but throughout the '60s stayed on *Fantastic Four*, *Thor* and the Captain America half of *Tales of Suspense*. Here is where Kirby made his greatest, most lasting contributions to Marveldom.

In the golden, first 102 issues of *Fantastic Four*, Kirby's New York City was filled with futuristic skyscrapers (the tallest of which always seemed to be the Baxter Building) and incredulous city dwellers (the men always wore hats, which harkened to Kirby's '40s roots). Weapons, machinery and transportation vehicles were ultra-modern and indecipherable in their detail. Humor went hand-in-hand with pathos; Ben Grimm was at once comical and grotesque.

In the majestic pages of *Thor*, Asgard was an endless, gleaming afterworld accessed by a winding rainbow bridge, populated by a cast right out of a Steve Reeves movie (with some sci-fi alterations in wardrobe).

Indeed, reading a Kirby-drawn *Fantastic Four* or *Thor* is like watching a movie with an unlimited budget, state-of-the-art special effects, an endless army of extras, and the finest stuntmen in the business. A Kirby page generates excitement.

But just who created the Fantastic Four, Thor, etc.–Lee, Kirby, or Lee and Kirby–is at the core of a long and bitter feud which both men prefer not to discuss. "Do you want the true story?" Kirby asks. "Let me put it this way: I would bring my work in to Marvel, and they would accept it. The story was there, the characters were there.

"The big thing at the time was radiation. What would it do to the human body? Nobody knew anything about it. It was a big mystery. People were concerned. And I knew that's where the sales were."

(The bottom line, says Kirby, is that he receives no royalties for any of the characters he either created and/or co-created for Marvel).

Kirby had been growing increasingly unhappy at Marvel by the late 1960s. He was given full writing credit for the first time in *Amazing Adventures*–for which he drew four issues of Inhumans stories beginning in 1970–but by then it was too little, too late.

Kirby left Marvel for DC in 1970, where he revamped *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*, starting a 16-issue run with #133. In *Jimmy Olsen*, he introduced the sons of the Newsboy Legion, created long-running DC characters Darkseid and Morgan Edge, and cloned a new Guardian (a Golden Age Simon/Kirby hero). In 1971, Kirby created *New Gods, Forever People* and *Mister Miracle*, inter-related titles that took place in "Kirby's Fourth World" (in these, Kirby was credited as editor/writer as well as artist). None of the "Fourth World" titles enjoyed long runs; Kirby kicked off *The Demon* and *Kamandi* in 1972; worthy inker Mike Royer did most of Kirby's finishes during this period.

Photo by Kathy Voglesong.

The penciller of Fantastic Four #1, Jack Kirby, as he looks today.

Readers were also treated to reprints of Simon and Kirby's Golden Age material, which appeared regularly in the backs of the Kirby line, often introduced by a self-portrait of the artist promising "Golden age grabbers." In 1974, Simon and Kirby reunited for the last time (so far!) on *Sandman* #1. In '75, Kirby created *Atlas, Manhunter* and *The Dingbats of Danger Street* for DC's new *First Issue Special* title. The man seemed to be a bottomless pit of imagination, and as much of a workhorse as ever.

But things soured again, and Kirby returned to Marvel's open arms in 1976, where he wrote and drew the quasi-religious science-fiction adventure titles *The Eternals* and *2001* ("based on" the Stanley Kubrick feature). The character Machine Man debuted in *2001* #8, and in 1978 headlined his own spin-off title, which Kirby drew for the first nine issues.

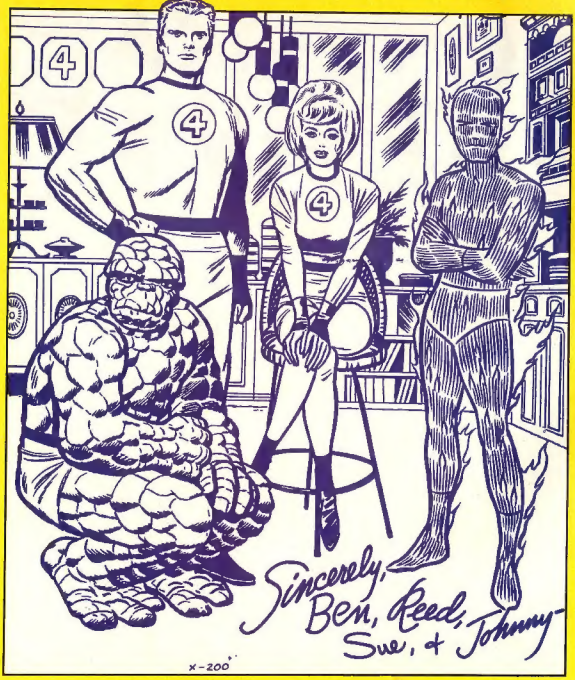
Kirby's most recent work can be found in independent comics like Pacific's *Captain Victory and the Intergalactic Rangers* (1981-'84) and *Silver Star* (1983), and Eclipse's *Destroyer Duck* (1982). For DC, Kirby drew issues of *Super Powers* (1984), illustrated his own characters for *Who's Who: the Definitive Directory of the DC Universe* (1985) and co-pencilled (with Alex Toth) the Challengers of the Unknown issue of the Superman team-up title *DC Comics Presents;* here, Kirby was inked by Greg Theakston (the Pure Imagination publisher who later released an excellent hardback Kirby sketchbook).

The distinctive Kirby style is a look still imitated today. Breathtaking, balletic action. A special way of drawing smoke, stars, machinery, fingers, women. Costume design that puts Hollywood to shame. He has left his imprint so totally on characters he created that they still scream Kirby, no matter which artist draws them. Joe Simon recently called him "a treasure, an American treasure."

On creating his most famous character, Captain America, the artist says: "It was a wonderful time for me, because it was easy to create a story in that particular atmosphere. That's probably the formula. The atmosphere around you will supply it.

"Your generation will get it from what's popular in your generation. Because, you fellas will interpret it. And whatever comes out of your interpretation, people will get to know the facts about the times that you live in. Just as Captain America supplied information about those particular times.

"All my comics have a basis in reality. I can tell you that the villains were very real. And the heroes were very real."



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